THE GOLDEN APPLE

A PLAY FOR KILTARTAN CHILDREN

By LADY GREGORY

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By Lady Gregory

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"The little old mud cabin by the hill."

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A PLAY FOR KILTARTAN CHILDREN

By LADY GREGORY

ILLUSTRATED BY MARGARET GREGORY

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To

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

The Gentlest of My Friends

23369

PERSONS

The King of Ireland

Simeon Maor . . . . *His Steward*

His Doctor

The Witch

Pampogue . . . . . *Her Daughter*

The Gardener

Fatach Mor . . . . *The Giant*

Bridget . . . . . *His Wife*

Muireann . . . . . *The King of Spain's Daughter*

Rury . . . . . *The King of Ireland's Son*

The King of Spain's Two Sons

Servants and Guards

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THE GOLDEN APPLE

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Act I. Scene I.

The Witch's garden. A little tree, Centre, *with leaves and blossom and one golden apple. A well before it. Gardener potting plants. He is singing a little song. He bends over well.*

Gardener. What way is it with you, my poor little five fishes? Looking up to the sunbeams ye are. Is it that ye remember yet the King's Court in Spain? I am thinking ye have sense and memory like any person walking the earth. Are you saying it is long ye are here in the garden, through seven springs of planting and seven summers of growth? (*Sings another verse.*) Have patience now and the young lady your sister will be coming to visit you and to speak to you unknownst to the Witch. Ah, you draw down under the water hearing that word! Is it that you are saying she done Druid tricks on you, changing your shape and bringing you from your country, and the little Tree of Power along with you? It's a pity now some to have too much talk, and ye that are a king's sons having none at all of it. It is likely

enough living down in that well ye will grow blind and deaf in the heel. Five little red-mouthed trouts! That is a bad way for a king's sons to be!— Mind yourselves now. It's the Witch is after coming from her journey. (*He sings and works.*)

(*Witch comes on. She is wearing a cloak of badger skins, and a mask with long teeth and a pair of goat's horns.*)

Witch. What way is the little tree?

Gardener. The best. I have it well cared. I am after putting a prop to it. If you would not support the head the neck of it would be staggery.

Witch. Blossom on it and an apple—the golden apple that will cure any sickness at all or any wound.

Gardener. Well cared I have it; flowery above and not cranky in the stalk the way some trees do be.

Witch. I have a mind to shift it and to plant it under my own window pane where I can be looking at it every day.

Gardener. It's best leave it where it is, and not to be combing or rising the roots.

Witch. It has too much of shades and of shelters. It was used to the country of the sun.

Gardener. Wait till the month of March comes at it and you'll see it's a great persecuting it will get, and it not to be minded the way it is.

Witch (*throwing off her cloak and mask*). Hide that under the branches. It is my daughter is coming—(*Pampogue enters.*) Come hither to me, Pampogue.

Pampogue. You are come back to the garden?

Witch. I am always glad to come back within its walls.

Pampogue. Walls! So there are enough of walls around us.

Witch. It is a good shelter for yourself they are as well as for the little tree.

Pampogue. I would sooner be outside whatever way it is, than to be closed up with no company but green plants.

Gardener. Sure the seeds we sowed will soon be flourishing up. There will be roses and posies and every sort that is pretty blooming out all around.

Pampogue. I am seven times tired with the sight of your roses and posies and of the white sun itself going up and going down.

Gardener. You will not find the seven days of the week too long, and some king's son to come courting you.

Pampogue. It is near time indeed for some one to bring me out from this.

Witch. Don't be in so great a hurry, child, to go out into the dangers of the world.

Pampogue. You yourself go out gathering news or making news far and wide. It would be more fitting I to be doing that, and you that are up in age to be sitting spinning at the wheel.

Witch. No, I will not do that. I to begin to give in to age, it is likely it would run through me too quick.

Pampogue. Bring me out with you so. I would like well

to travel among neighbours and to go visiting at country houses by the roadside.

Witch. Have patience, child, for a while.

Pampogue. To be with myself only I'd think the day as long as a year! Where is the benefit of all the power you own, when you cannot get me settled in a good place. It is time for me to be giving out food to company and keeping the keys of a house.

Witch. I did not see the husband yet I thought to be worthy of you.

Pampogue. You never gave me a sight of any one at all, only the gardener. All the fair-haired men I hear talk of, finding comrades on the round world, and I myself hidden from them among trees!

Witch. It is foretold to me it is love for some man of the round world will put you under trouble and torment. Wait a while, and when the right stars will be up in the heavens I will find you a lucky match.

Pampogue. You are making excuses with your stars! I to have been seen before this I would have my choice of husbands!

Witch. You have very proud, hardy talk! Is it Splendour, son of the King of the Greeks, you are looking for, or the King of Prussia's son?

Pampogue. You to have given me royal blood it would be easy for me make a match with a king's son.

Witch. There is not a woman of my race that had not a king under her feet! But as to yourself, I will

give you no leave at all to wed with any man of Adam's race.

Pampogue. I heard it said my father was of that breed.

Witch. If he was, it is on his account I am at war with the whole tribe of men, striving to draw away their life.

Pampogue. If you pleased yourself, why would not I please myself in a man?

Witch. Do so, and he will leave your heart to walk barefoot over a hard highroad of flints.

Pampogue. Is it that you are looking for some man in the fairies for me? Or gone out of the body? Or one coming from the country Underwave, having a skin the colour of coal?

Witch. I have no desire to give you up at all. If I had, as to matches, I was offered one but yesterday.

Pampogue. Who was that?

Witch. Fatach Mor the Giant——

Pampogue. He has a wife of his own.

Witch. He is but the matchmaker. It is for a friend he came asking, that is coming to his castle looking for a wife.

Pampogue. Has he a good way of living?

Witch. He has put a rent upon the whole of Scotland. There are some say he has laid it upon the birds of the air.

Pampogue. Is he a natural man?

Witch. He is nearer to the class of the giants. He is the Grugach of the Humming.

Pampogue. Is he anyway well looking?

Witch. Middling only. Wait, and I will find you a better match in a quarter or three quarters of a year.

Pampogue. I'll take him. To see the daffodils sprouting in this place again it would surely bring me to my death. Gardener!

Gardener (*coming*). What is it?

Pampogue. I'm going out of this! I'm going to make a great match! I will never come inside a garden again, but be driving in carriages through crowded streets.

Gardener. Is that a fact?

Pampogue (*to Witch*). You will want to give me some good clothes. Let them be made the same as the King of Spain's daughter had the time you brought her here. A cloak of the colour of the foxglove she had, and roses worked around the hem of her skirt.

Gardener. So she had. There is nothing left to her now, only her little golden mittens. There was no one but would turn his head to look at her.

Pampogue. There is no one would look at her now. She is nothing at all in her suit of a girl of the ducks and ashes. Get me clothes the same as she had till I'll show out well.

Witch (*to Gardener*). Go, seek some bundles of silks and satins are inside the door of the house. Bring here the serving girl with you. (*Gardener goes.*) You can make your choice of the dearest sort of silk that is pleasing to you.

Pampogue. Let the girl herself sew the dress for me.

Witch. She will, and you will become it well. Turn up

your hair now and make a ball of it. It is true enough you are grown out of being a child.

(*Muireann comes, dressed in tattered sacking, with Gardener who carries bundles.*)

Pampogue. Rinse now the dirt from off your hands the way they will be fit to handle silk clothes.

Muireann (*showing her hands*). They are roughened with the sods and ashes, but they are clean.

Witch. Look now at these silks that are the grandest nearly in the world. You have to shape and to sew a dress for Pampogue such as they wear at the Court of Spain.

Muireann. It is long since I saw a suit of the kind.

Witch. Put your mind to it now. This dress must be made ready by evening, by the time of the gathering of the crows.

Muireann. I think that is not enough of time.

Witch. That is slûggishness. If the work is not done by then your bed will be the iron harrow.

Pampogue. If it fails her to do this, bid her go clean out the seven cowhouses that never were cleaned for seven years.

Muireann. Give me thread and needles.

Pampogue (*to Gardener*). Give her a few threads from that pound ball that is tied to the stem of the tree.

Witch. There are needles. Have a care of them. My father gave me the full of a ship of them, and I lost none and broke none and there are but those five left, where they are all worn out sewing and making and mending my clothes. (*She goes.*)

Pampogue (*watches girl work. Takes up scissors*). What call has a girl carrying turf and herding geese to have on her such a head of hair? (*Snips a lock from it.*) There! (*Throws it on grass.*) The birds will take it to be hemp or oakum and will carry it away, lining their nests. (*She tries to cut another lock.*)

Muireann. Do not touch it! If I am poor in the world to-day, it was a queen was used to smooth out that hair.

Pampogue. It is much if I leave you your golden mittens.

Muireann. It is only my hand they will fit.

Pampogue. Be civil now and mannerly and maybe I will bring you to attend me and sew my clothes where I am getting a great match out in Scotland.

Muireann. I was brought to this place by the power and the spells of the witch that is your mother. It is all one to me where I go, or do not go, as long as I am not free from that power.

Pampogue. You are loth to leave your little brothers maybe in the well.

Muireann. There is no one in this place under sorrow but only themselves and myself.

Pampogue. Give me a thread of your threads.

Muireann. Here it is, and a needle.

Pampogue. No, it is a pin I am wanting. Here now is one. I will crooken it and put a berry on it and go fishing for pinkeens in the well. There is nothing at all in the fashion, they were telling me, but gloves made of the skin of a fish.

Muireann (*jumping up and seizing thread*). You will get no leave to do that! The Witch herself will get no leave to do it! Go away out of this!

Pampogue (*spitefully and frightened*). There now, you have the five needles lost! I will go tell of you that through crossness and through spite you cast them down into the well. You will surely be sent cleaning out the seven cowsheds! (*Goes.*)

Muireann. My grief and my sorrow!

Gardener (*coming forward*). That one would spit out poison would wither up the grass!

Muireann. Did you hear her tormenting me?

Gardener. I did. I'd sooner a venomous mist to come and to slaughter the crops. She's as cross as a bag of weasels.

Muireann. She threatened to cast down her line and her hook, and I started, and lost the Witch's needles in the well!

Gardener. That she may be worse this day twelvemonth!

Muireann. I cannot get a view of them at all. They are stuck down in the sand and in the stones.

Gardener. That herself and all belonging to her may wither off the face of the earth!

Muireann (*with a shout of joy*). They have brought them back to me! My needles! Every one of the five little fishes put up his head, and he having a needle in his mouth!

Gardener. Is that a fact?

Muireann. Aren't those now the good little brothers? By and by when the work is ended I will play a little tune to you that we used to hear in our father's house.

Gardener. It is a hard thing you to be left to the kindness of fishes. It is a king's son in his own shape should be coming to your aid.

Muireann (*standing up*). It is near the fall of evening. Look at the flight of the wild ducks across the sky. (*A sound of cawing.*) There now are the crows gathering to the high elms.

Gardener. Whisht! They travel far. I am listening to their news of the world.

Muireann. I am lost now and destroyed. I have made no way at all with the work. The Witch will show no kindness. She will put trouble and hardship on me through the night. But I will not give in to her to shed tears or to give out any cry at all! (*Gardener laughs.*)

Muireann. It is a bad time you choose for laughing!

Gardener. There is many a one would laugh, having knowledge of the talk of the birds.

Muireann. Teach it to me so.

Gardener. I will do that. I learned it from a blue hawk that was my grandmother.

Muireann. A while ago there was no one would laugh, the time I would be under any of the little troubles of a child.

Gardener. There is news will set a man laughing at any time because he knows it will turn to good.

Muireann. Is it news that will help my case?

Gardener. It is. It is news of a dying king. (*He goes off singing his little song.*)

(*Muireann sits down and sews desperately. Gardener*

comes back dressed as a ragged messenger with broken breeches and tattered shoes, his ears sticking through his cap.)

Gardener. I am going a journey.

Muireann. Oh, bring me along with you! Bring me away from the Witch's garden!

Gardener. It would be no use. You cannot stir unknownst to her.

Muireann. I would run fast, very fast.

Gardener. Old as she is, she is as supple-walking in her limbs as a young girl.

Muireann. I could hide.

Gardener. You could not. She is a very fierce woman. There is not a wall in any part would keep you safe from her rage.

Muireann. There is no help for me so.

Gardener. It is time for me get it for you.

Muireann. What way can you travel so far?

Gardener. I didn't live these seven years under a witch without learning some of her trade. There are wild geese on the wing to-night. It is along with them I will go.

Muireann. Oh, will you save me out of this!

Gardener. I promise you that. I give you as bail the four quarters of the heavens and of the sea and of the land against my own body and my soul! (*Goes.*)

(*Witch and daughter come in*).

Witch. Where are the needles I gave you?

Muireann. They are here. I am sewing with one. The rest are stuck in my mitten.

Witch (*to Pampogue*). You deceived me, saying she had lost them, and bringing me here from my rest that I was in need of, where the day was long on me.

Pampogue. She has not the sewing near done. Send her to clean out the seven sheds.

Witch. Keep quiet. I am tired with your peevishness. I will listen to no more of your talk. Mind yourself, girl! I will let you off punishment to-night, but the rods will be ripe and ready for you to-morrow!

(*Witch and daughter go.*)

(*Muireann takes her little silver pipe, bends over well, and plays "The little old mud cabin by the hill."*)

End of Scene I., Act I.

Act I. Scene II.

A room in the Court of the King of Ireland. The King lying on a bed. Doctor sitting beside him. Servants. Simon Maor comes in and looks at him.

Simon. Is there life in the King yet?

Doctor. There is, but hardly.

Simon. He shrunk greatly in the days past. He reduced very much in the face.

Doctor. No wonder in that, and he lying on the bed through the three quarters of the year. He never made a laugh since he was in it. It is a heavy wound he got.

Simon. It was bad to him to be beat in the battle. And his seven packs of hounds at the same time to be swept from him and lost.

Doctor. It was worse to him, the two eldest sons to be killed in the same fight where he got the wound.

Simon. The son that is left to him is worth the whole of them.

Doctor. He's not much. It's hard lead him. The father himself is more apt to take my counsel and advice. It is long till he will be fitting to be King.

Simon. It is not long till he will be that. That old remnant in the bed lost a power of money over you, but there isn't left of him now but the same as a shadow in a bottle. Not an ounce of flesh on him, but only skin and bones.

Doctor. He would be a great loss to Ireland. I might bring him around yet.

Simon. It would maybe give him relief to quit the world. To die in your bed is the safest death. It would be nearly a pity he not to go, and all prepared so nice.

(*A servant brings in a sheepskin.*)

Doctor. Give that to me. (*He takes skin and begins to wrap it round King.*)

Simon. What skin is that?

Doctor. The skin of a sheep that is after being killed, fresh and warm. I am about to wrap it about his body. It might put some heat into his blood.

Simon. Whose orders were those to go killing a sheep?

Doctor. My own orders, as the King's doctor.

Simon. If you are itself, I am the King's steward. I will bear no meddling with my flocks.

Doctor. I will meddle and have a right to meddle, where it is for the service of the King.

Simon. Out of what flock did they go bring it?

Doctor. Tush! What way would I know? A sheep is a sheep—a four-footed beast in the field, and mutton when it is served on the table. When it is but the skin I am in need of, it makes no difference what sort they will go kill.

Simon. It makes a big differ to myself. A doctor that is stuck in the house has no call to interfere with the stock. Let me see now, did you take one of the culled ewes I have ready for October fair, or the wethers I am fattening against Shrove? (*Pulls at sheepskin.*)

Doctor. Don't be stirring it now, letting in the draught.

Simon. I wouldn't begrudge a horny hogget from the mountain; a hardy class that go foraging on furze and heath.

Doctor. I tell you I don't care what it is so long as it has warmth within it, and a weighty fleece.

Simon. A weighty fleece! (*Feels it.*) Have a care; is it my Ormond ram!

Doctor. I'll tell the King on you, and that you begrudge him his own.

Simon. I'll tell the King's son you went killing and destroying what will be *his* own! It's likely it will not be *this* King will be reckoning the lambs' tails next Easter!

Doctor. He might not be as near it as you think.

Simon. Signs are he might. It's the world will be changing around you. I tell you a true word, it is not everybody would drink *your* medicines!

Doctor. Go on now till he'll hear you! He is wakening. (*King feebly stirs.*)

Simon. There is hot stones on the hearth. Wait till I will put them to his feet. (*He brings stones and puts them at end of bed.*)

King. Where is Rury, my son?

Doctor. Out hurling, I suppose; or fowling with his horse and his dog.

Simon. He never was far out in the country since the bad turn came, but around the gardens and the house.

King. Send out looking for him. He is all the son that I have.

Simon. And you are all the father he ever had. He dotes down on yourself.

Doctor. It is natural a young lad to be sporting and rambling.

Simon. You know well that through the night time, and the King sleeping, he was sitting by the brink of the bed.

Doctor. If the King would charge myself with any message to him, or any commands as to his behaviour, there would no mistake be made.

King. Is it certain I am going out?

Doctor. I am striving to keep the life in you. I have death baulked and baffled up to this. I have kept him back from the pillow, but he is at the foot of the bed.

(*A horn heard.*)

King. What is that?

Simon. It is the big horn is at the grand gate. It is long since it was sounded out before.

Doctor. It is likely it is some king sending to ask news of your health.

King. A king is it?

Doctor. I would say by the sound it is one of the big men of the world.

King. Put me sitting up against the pillow.

(*Doctor and Simon raise him.*)

Doctor. Take care would you let him slip down?

King. What is this you have put around me?

Doctor. The skin of a sheep newly killed.

King (*with a roar*). Is it that you thought me to be dead that you dared to dress me up as a sheep? Is that the way you have made me a fool of so soon as you thought my senses to be gone?

Doctor. It was the skin that brought you around.

Simon. It was not, but the hot stones.

King. A sheepskin! Had you no lion from the Eastern World to go skin, or a bull itself would be sending out challenges, tearing up the sod with his horns?

Doctor. I thought to be doing what was right.

King. Let ye put some face upon my bed! Kings do not die like flies in a heap, one the same as another. Every king has a separate death, and should have it! How would you know what time it would be put in a story or a song?

(*They arrange armour and rough skins about his bed.*)

Doctor. Here is the big shield, the Wheel of Battle. I will put it beside your hand.

King. Let in now the king or the king's messenger that is come maybe from Arthur of Britain or from the Crown of France.

(*Door is opened and Gardener appears in his dress as a ragged man.*)

Who is that?

Doctor. A ragged green man!

Simon. Broken breeches on him, and puddle water in his shoes.

Doctor. Turn him out!

Simon. Put him out the door!

King. Let the crows make their supper of him to-night!

(*All push him towards door. Rury appears coming in and pushes him back.*)

Doctor. Who is stopping him?

Simon. It is Rury, the King's son.

Rury. He is a messenger. He has the right to give his message.

Gardener. I have an advice to give.

King. Is it sent by a comrade king?

Gardener. It is not.

Doctor. Are you doctor to any king?

Gardener. I am not.

Simon. Or steward to any king?

Gardener. I am not.

Simon. Then you have no word that is worth saying

Rury. Let him speak.

Gardener. The birdeens of the air brought word where I was that the King of Ireland is all but in the grip of death.

Doctor. It is no wonder the birds themselves to be crying him.

Gardener. It is not crying or keening they were, but laughing.

King. What is he saying?

Gardener. Laughing to think there is a great king going out, and he not sending some messenger to the lucky apple tree in that place.

Rury. What way would that help him?

Gardener. The cure of the world is in it. There is a golden apple on that tree would raise a man it had failed all the doctors to rise.

Rury. Is that a true story?

Gardener. It's as true as I'm telling you. To make a sound man of him it would, and to give him lengthening of life.

King. It is hard to believe it at all.

Doctor. With all the cures I am doing through the years I never heard of it.

Simon. Who is it owns the apple?

Gardener. It is owned presently by the Witch that is called in Ireland the Hag of Slaughter, that has it robbed from the Royalty of Spain.

Rury. Is it east or west the garden is?

Gardener. It is not knowledge of the roads will bring you to that far foreign place that is called Garrdin-dearead-an domhain, the Garden at the World's End.

(*Rury goes aside, puts on cloak, takes up and tries some weapons.*)

King. It should be a long way off.

Gardener. To go for the apple and to get the apple and to bring it to this place would need the length of a year and a day.

Simon. Will the King last out that long?

Doctor. I'll engage to keep him for that time through the power of my physic, that is maybe as good as apples in the heel.

King. If you do not, I will leave it in my will, every doctor in Ireland to be hanged!

Simon. And who now will go look for the apple?

Gardener. It is a man having courage should do that. There is a giant in the way, Fatach Mor. There is danger in passing by his house.

Simon. I wouldn't think much of giants; I never heard of a giant having stock enough to keep a steward, or a herd itself, employed.

Gardener. There are the tricks of the Hag of Slaughter.

Simon. The people do be full of stories of her. But I never could be in dread of a witch.

Gardener. There is the Wood of Wonders to be passed, that is full of monsters and of shadow shapes.

Simon. I never would believe in that sort. I am going about through the dark night every lambing time, and I never met with anything worse than myself.

Gardener. There is the Hill of Fire to be crossed that sends up a blast of flame; and the Mountain of Spearheads that are sticking up through the ground.

Simon. It is the one in charge of the King's health should go in search of what will stiffen out his life. We reckon the doctor that much use.

King. Let him go so without delay.

Doctor. It would fail me to do it in the time. I am no good stepper on the road, let alone upon spearheads and fiery flames. I am too far out in years.

Simon. It is lively it will make you. There is no one rightly young, only those that will travel.

Doctor. Send out the captains of the King's army.

King. They have no drill or preparation to protect them against unnatural things.

Simon. The Witch to change them into grasshoppers they would be crushed under the weight of their armour—and they to shrink so much in bulk!

Doctor. Let you yourself go, where you are making a mock of danger.

Simon. Is it I myself? What about my hay? My stacks? My haggard? With the milk to be regulated and all the cows that are about to calve!

Doctor. You are in dread of the Giant and the Witch.

Simon. I am not. But I am loth to meddle with apples after what happened in Adam's Paradise. (*King sinks back.*)

Doctor (*to the servants*). It's as good for you lay out the sheets.

Rury (*coming forward and speaking to Simon*). Take good care of my white greyhound till I come back. You may put out the horses at grass.

Simon. Where is it you are going?

Rury. Keep in the red colt through the heat of the day. He goes crazy when the flies come around him.

King. You are not going away, Rury?

Rury. I will be back in a year and a day.

Simon. Is it that you are going for the apple?

King. You cannot go. It is not according to right rule the heir to go, and the King himself not having strength in his hand to notch his name or his command upon a stick.

Doctor. It is right he should go. Everything that can be done should be done to save the King's life.

Simon. Is it that you have it in your mind to make him banish the son?

King. I crave and command you not to go into those dangers.

Rury. Who would not to hell for a cure if one belonging to him was sick?

Simon. Hasn't the lad great courage?

King. I will not let you go! You that have always earned my blessing and that never have earned my curse.

Rury. Keep your heart up and rouse yourself, and you won't feel the year passing. For the latter end of the world to be to-morrow I would go out in the same way.

King. Do not let him out the door! He will never bring his life away out of all that!

Simon. You would as easy put a gad around sand, or keep a hold of a sunbeam in your fist.

King. His two brothers went out laughing, and it was to meet with their death.

Simon. And he not knowing so much as where is the garden!

Rury. If it isn't in the east I'll go west, and if it isn't in

the west I'll go south, and from that again to the north! I will not eat two meals in the one place or sleep two nights in the one bed till I will bring back the cure for your healing!

Simon. Take comfort, King. I myself will go with him for to take charge of him on the road.

Doctor. That's right. The King will give you the lend of him, Rury, for the length of a year and a day.

Simon. I will walk every whole step of Ireland, but I'll bring him back safe and sound!

King. Lift the flagstone from the hearth and give him out the sword was cooled with three drops of lions' blood.

Simon. Ask him along with that to give you the costs of the road. (*King points to a purse, and Doctor gives it to Simon.*) I leave it on the King this is travelling charges, and should not be put to my account as steward.

Rury. The messenger is gone. We must overtake him till we learn what way we should make our start for the Garden at the World's End!

Simon (*to the Guard*). Let you strike up now, boys, the "Shan van voght"!

(*March played. They go out. The King sinks back weeping. Doctor stands over him.*)

End of Scene II., Act I.

Act I. Scene III.

The Wood of Wonders. An open space. Evening darkening. Witch and Pampogue come in with branches.

Pampogue. Is this what they call the round world? It is a lonely looking sort of a place.

Witch. You gave me no rest till I would bring you with me, and now you are not content.

Pampogue. What made you choose this wild spot?

Witch. It is best for the work I have to do.

Pampogue. You didn't tell me yet what is that work.

Witch. A thief that is coming the road to bring away the apple from the garden. What I have to do is to put him backward.

Pampogue. What ails you that you cannot rise up in the air like a mist and come down and turn him into a green stone?

Witch. We have our own way to contend with. There are some things it is hard for me to touch.

Pampogue. They give out you have power over all things.

Witch. I am under orders like the rest. There is an

order that we cannot meddle with the royal blood of Ireland, that is protected since the time of the Danes; unless it will come into our power through fear or through tasting our food.

Pampogue. Is it one of that blood is coming the road?

Witch. Not at all—not at all—just a thief, a pair of robbers. It will be easy frighten them, putting these branches around them, that they will think themselves to be in a wood. (*She makes branches into bundles.*) To drive the wits from them with fear, that will be best of all. I will raise a sound in the air, they will think it to be a storm of wind.

Pampogue. Give me some branches to be shaking at them. I will flutter up my apron till they will feel a blast.

Witch. Do not. To hear the sound of wind and not to feel it would put more dread into the heart.

Pampogue. What made you gather that bag of rush cotton?

Witch. We will make with it the appearance of snow.

Pampogue. What at all are you putting around you? I never saw that ugly dress.

Witch (*putting on badger skin, cloak, and mask*). That is the way the men of the earth have me pictured. The skin of badgers around me and two goats' horns going out through my head.

Pampogue. I would not like to be looking at you. Keep away from me.

Witch. That is the story they give out about the Hag of

Slaughter. It is for the like of them we that are ever-living must put on the ugly image of age. Let them see me as they have made me out to be.

Pampogue. Whisht! There is some one coming.

Witch. Come back here out of their sight. (*They take up bushes and branches and stand behind them.*)

(*Enter Rury and Simon.*)

Simon. I wish we could see some lodging. There is a queer sound from the sky. I heard like a blast of wind that would lay the thistles low.

Rury. It is but a storm is rising.

Simon. To come a sudden darkening of the light there did.

Rury. It is but a cloud over the moon. You are losing courage to be in dread of that.

Simon. I did not, but sore in the heart with walking I am. My legs are near worn to the knee. I might as well be a car-wheel on the road.

Rury. If there is a long road behind us it is likely the road before us is longer again.

Simon. The soles of my boots is near wore out.

Rury. They will have to last a good while yet.

Simon. They will, where they lasted near thirty years already, for they will be but the soles of my two feet.

(*Branches waved around them.*)

Rury. We would seem to be gone astray in some forest.

Simon. In some terrible wilderness of a wood.

Rury. Hush! I am thinking it should be the Wood of Wonders. There is some music playing of itself.

(*A wild air is played.*)

Simon. I would say it to be the sea roaring as if all the people of the world were to be drowned. Believe me, it is best for us turn back.

Rury. You came out boasting you were in dread of nothing.

Simon. I am not, and the sun to be in the heavens. The day is getting as dark as if all the men in the King's jail were being hanged!

Rury. That was a branch fell upon my head.

Simon. It was no branch fell on myself, but some person hit a stroke on my back.

Rury. There is no person here to do that.

Simon. There is another—and another!

Rury. Do not give in to fancy. There is no one hitting you at all.

Simon. It is you yourself is doing it! It is an unkind thing doing that!

Rury. I feel strokes coming on myself. They are given with a whip of thorns.

Simon. Turn back I tell you, bring your life out of this!

Rury. I will bring it out on the other side. I will not go doubling like a hare.

Simon. There is a lion of roaring!

Rury. I wish he would come before my sword.

Simon. There is like the howling of red-haired wolves!

There is a shiver of fright going through me! I don't wish to be killed, where I was not brought up to it like kings' sons.

Rury. We cannot lose our life spending it in dread of death.

Simon. The thirty walls of heaven to be lighting bonfires to be welcoming me, I would sooner go back to my own parish.

Rury. The doctor would make fun of you seeing you now.

Simon. That he himself may be put under curses and spells and the unnatural creatures of the air!

Rury. All I would ask is light to recognize them.

Simon. Natural things to come against me I would not know fear or fright— Do you hear that now?

Rury. They are but shapes and spirits. They can do us no bodily harm.

Simon. There is a hand touched me.

Rury. It was of no living person. The feel of it was like the feel of ice.

Simon. There is like a shivering come upon me— What is that passed by?

Rury. Three bald clowns having three hounds in their hands and three reddened spears.

Simon. Who is there? Keep yourself away from me!

A Voice. I am a man of the hurlers without heads. Four-and-twenty men of us, and the ball we are playing with is my own head. (*Sound of sticks upon a ball.*)

Simon. I wouldn't wish to be hunted through Ireland by hard bristly heads without legs!

Rury. What do you want of us?

Voice. Dig a grave for us! Dig a grave for us! (*They go off.*)

Simon. There is a foot with a spur on it.

Rury. Take that foot out of my path! (*Strikes at it.*)

Another Voice. I tell you, this time yesterday there was no one dared meddle with that foot!

Rury. There are horrible things about us!

Many Voices. Go back! Go back! There is no road for you here!

(*Witch appears.*)

Simon. Look at her, look! That one would make a hare of you! She is the Hag of Slaughter!

Rury. I will never turn back for any Witch's bidding!

A Voice. Many a better thief than yourself went the same journey and not a one ever came back!

(*There are shrieks, and snow is thrown about them, then a thick smoke.*)

Rury. It is like the smoke of elder-wood. We will go on.

Simon. Wait awhile—my heart is panting. I thought the world was going down!

Rury. The smoke is clearing away.

Simon. Oh! There came a smell from it like as if all the dead people of the world were there!

(*Smoke clears away. Witch seen sitting by a fire*

singing a lament. She is not wearing mask and horns, but has a black shawl over her head. Her grey hair is hanging.)

Witch. Stop here and eat a bit with me, King of Ireland's son!

Simon. Do not stop with her. She is no way pleasing to look at, and her hair down to her heels.

Rury. I am hurrying on my journey, I have no time to stop in any place.

Witch. I to have grandeur about me and a grand big dinner to give you, you would stop. But because I am poor and miserable and have but a bone to offer you, you will not stop.

Rury. That is not so; it is that I am in haste.

Witch. The man that will not show respect to those who are low, even if he is high, he will get no respect for himself.

Simon. Do not stop with her! She will work on us a charm or a spell! (*Witch goes on keening.*)

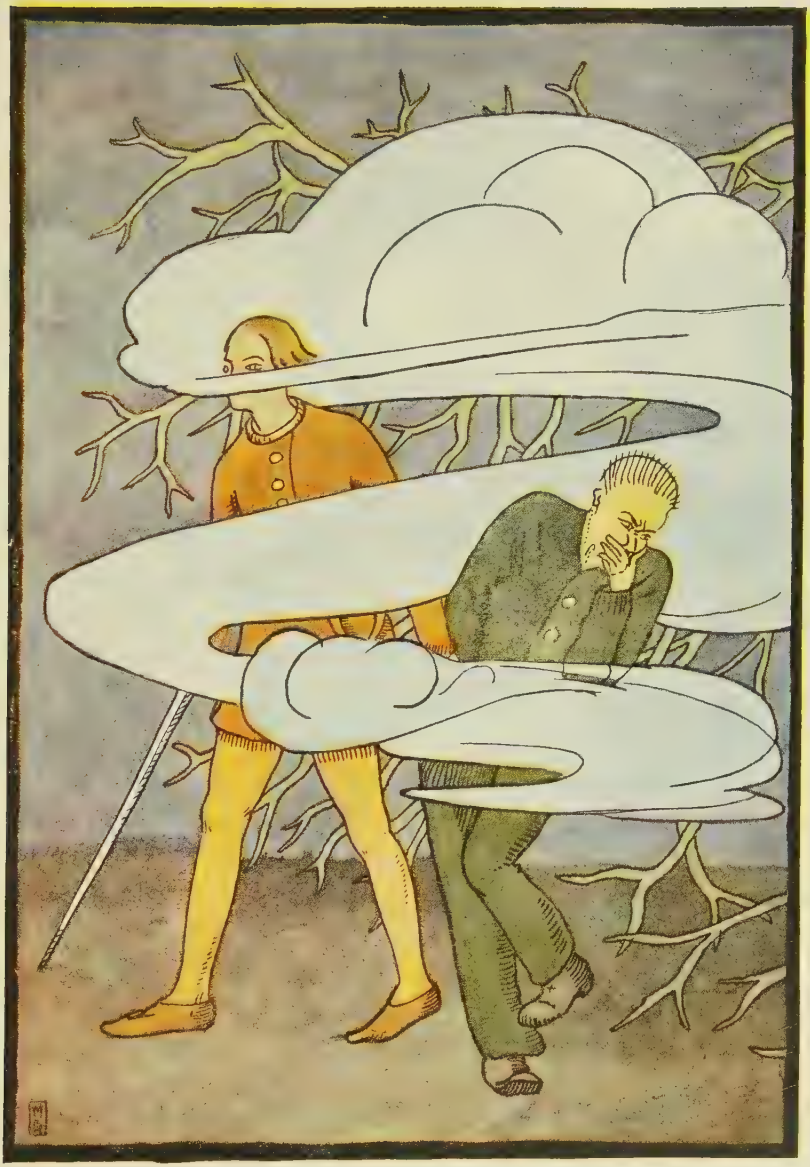
Rury (*pushing him off*). It is a habit of my habits never to listen to the call of a lone woman without getting knowledge of her case. What name have you?

Witch. My name is Sighing and Sorrow, Black Night of Winter, White Night of Snow; Grief, Groaning, Keening, and a Grave!

Rury. What is it ails you?

Witch. Sit down till I will tell you. Twelve sons I had and they are all after being brought away to their death.

Rury. What way can I help you?



Rury: It is like the smoke of elder-wood. We will go on.
Simon: Wait awhile—my heart is panting. I thought the world was going down!

Witch. Go back, bring the armies of the King of Ireland till they will go against the armies of the Dogheads that brought them away.

Rury. I cannot do that. I must go on until my business will be done. I will come then and help you.

Witch. You are deceiving me.

Rury. I never left a lie after me in any place.

Witch. Take this bone in your hand; put this flesh I offer you in your mouth.

Rury. I will not deny you because you are in trouble and grief.

(*Rury is putting a bit in his mouth when Pampogue comes behind him and snatches it from him.*)

Pampogue. Use none of her food or you are a gone man! It is best throw it in the fire. (*She throws it away.*)

Witch. My seven curses upon you, you have freed him when I all but had him in my hands!

Rury. You are lying to me, and deceiving me! You are no lone woman wanting help.

Witch. I will get you yet! I will tear the heart out of you! I swear it by the earth that holds the graves of the dead!

Rury. There is no fear on me. I know who you are. You are the Hag of Slaughter.

Witch. I am that! And I tell you I myself will set the ravens croaking over your grave.

Rury. They will never croak and call out in Connacht that I was brought down by a hag! Have a care now! I am loth to shed the blood of a woman, but it would be right for

me to strike at a witch! (*He takes Simon's shoulder and goes off waving a sword.*)

Witch (*to Pampogue*). That is what you have done with your meddling and your want of wit.

Pampogue. You lied to me! He is a king's son. I would not give you leave to put poison in his mouth.

Witch. Fool! You think to manage me and to set yourself over me! It was no poison. It was the food that would put him under my power for ever, and he taking and eating it from my hand.

Pampogue. Get him into your power again and put the seven spells of love on him. I will have nothing to do with your Giants and Grugachs, it is with that man only I will wed.

Witch. You are on the path of destruction now. My grief that I let you leave the garden!

Pampogue. Go, get me that king's son!

Witch. Have you no thought at all for her who cared and reared you, and gave in to everything you would ask?

Pampogue. Get me what I want! You filled me with the things I did not want. It is my own way I will go now!

Witch. It will be a bad way for you and for myself. But take your own way. I will get him for you, if striving will do it. I will give him the Golden Apple. It will buy for you his love. But I thought the man was not born in Ireland that would stand against my spells as he did.

(*The same wild music is heard.*)

End of Scene III., Act I.

Act I. Scene IV.

A room in the Giant's castle. He and Wife are playing Fox and Goose on a large blackboard with chalk.

Wife. This and this blots out that—and one for the good of my make. I rub out your noughts and put in my own crosses.

Giant (*throwing down his bit of chalk*). I'll play no more Fox and Goose. You had me beat last time. (*He yawns.*)

Wife. What now would you wish to be doing?

Giant. Couldn't you draw down a new story or an old story out of the book.

Wife. The History of the Giants is it? It's a holy terror to be reading them. (*Takes book and sits down.*) Which now will be your choice? There's as many of them as my fingers and toes. This one is the story of Fuath of the Seven Heads and Seven Humps and Seven Necks, that was one of the best giants ever counted in Ireland.

Giant. I heard that before.

Wife. You did not, but of the Scotch giant of the Seven Glens and Seven Bens and Seven Bogs.

Giant. What now did he do?

Wife (*looking in book*). He used to be dragging six bullocks by their tails at the one time, and to go harrow the ground with the bristled body of two wild boars he would tie to the two strings of his shoe.

Giant. Am I now as strong as that one?

Wife. You are, to be sure, my dear, you are.

Giant. Sound me out another.

Wife. Would you wish Head-without-Body, son of King of the Castles, that came home from his morning ramble driving seven kings in a gad?

Giant. Could I now do that much?

Wife. You could, my dear, you could.

Giant. This is such a backward place I would hardly meet with a king in a twelvemonth, where they are all banished, I suppose, to their own countries. Go on now.

Wife. There is a very pretty little story of one Dearg Mor. His head and his hands that were after being cut off came playing cards with Finn Mac Cuil on a ship.

Giant. I wouldn't wish my head and hands to be cut off. It is often I do be thinking since I turned to be a giant I might have followed some better trade.

Wife. You might have gone as a billeted soldier in the line army, to be a bully in the service of a king.

Giant. I am thinking it is a middling easy job to be a king.

Wife. There are giants left as good a name after them, such as Polyphemus that was killed by the great Greek.

Giant. Kings go from father to son, and one that is

slack in his wits might not be found out for a long while. But you have to be a giant of yourself, and to put up your own name.

Wife. So you do put it up, my dear, so you do.

Giant. I am thinking there is a reflection on giants, now people are getting to be so cranky and so enlightened. What story now will be written in the book of myself, the great Giant, Fatach Mor?

Wife (*jumping up*). I myself to write the book, I would say he was a great bother stopping all through the day in the house, and not to go and cut a few heads of cabbage for the dinner.

Giant. Ah, what dinner? I am not able to lessen on anything worth while this long time. I have the appetite lost.

Wife. To move about and to stir yourself you should, and to lend a hand turning the hay.

Giant. I cannot grabble with everything at once. Little you care if I got as thin as a fishing-rod. I, now, suffer more than any common man. There is more room for the pain to work by reason of the height of my body and the length there is in my limbs.

Wife. Let you send for a doctor so, if you are not satisfied with the attendance I am giving you.

Giant. A doctor should have more knowledge.

Wife. Never fear, he'll have knowledge enough to take your money, giving your sickness every name longer than another.

Giant. It is yourself begrudges them the fee.

Wife. Fee enough not to cut the head off them. Giving you, maybe, medicines were in bottles on the shelf these sixty years, that you hardly could read the labels on them.

Giant. There is a physician, they were telling me, at the King of Ireland's Court. The capital doctor of the country he is. He is greatly beloved with the King.

Wife. He should be free by this, for I heard a good while ago the King was in a dying state under his hand.

Giant. Can't you give your mind now to send your pigeon messenger to bid him put on his coat of healing and come hither without delay? Give me some sort of a note or a writing for him.

Wife. Ah! Get out the door, will you, and I'll give you anything you'll ask outside heaven!

Giant (*at door to left*). It is on you it will fall, any harmless person to get their death seeing me on the road—through terror of my height and of my size.

Wife. Close the door after you!

Giant (*putting in his head again*). Don't forget, now, setting out the yard as a giant's yard should be set out, every fork but one having a head on it.

Wife. Have a care! I am about to throw scalding water out the door! (*She lifts pot from fire. Giant slams door and goes.*) (*Sitting down.*) My joy go with you in a bottle of moss, and if you never come back you'll be no great loss! (*She takes out a little stocking, turns out money into her lap and counts it. There is a knock at door to* RIGHT.) Come in!

(*Rury and Simon enter, very travel-stained and tired.*)

Rury. We are travelling a long time. Can you give us food and rest?

Wife (*jumping up and curtseying low*). My hundred thousand welcomes to you, King's son from Ireland!

Rury. What way do you know me?

Wife. Why wouldn't I recognize the signs of a king and I reared in Connacht? You are the highest blood in Ireland, by your father anyway.

Rury. It is a good thing to meet with a welcome.

Wife. You never were more welcome, and if there were ten of you, you would be welcome! But is it that you came riding spread-legs down a rainbow, or what way at all did you come?

Rury. We travelled a queer long way coming here.

Simon. We did surely. We have half the world walked.

Wife. You should have come through great dangers.

Simon. If we did, we came through them well. That lad, my master, would face anything, dog or Christian, he would meet.

Wife. I didn't hear a Connacht man's voice the seven years I am a Giant's wife.

Simon. What giant?

Wife. This is the house of Fatach Mor.

Simon (*uneasily*). Is it that there is within that door a full room of skulls?

Rury. Give us something to eat, and we will go on our road.

Wife (*putting porridge from a saucepan into bowls*). You

couldn't eat healthier than the oatmeal. It will give you nice courage for a while. We don't have meat in the house but one day in the week, and that day is yesterday.

Simon. I suppose the Giant devours his meal abroad, tearing and rending it where it falls. It should be a terrible thing to be wed with a man the like of that.

Wife. Indeed, I'd sooner be at my own liberty than confined in this place. Whisper—I am trying to fill a little stocking against the time I'll go back to Connacht.

Rury. Can you give me news of the Garden that is at the World's End?

Wife. It is I myself can give it.

Rury. I have to get an apple there for my father's healing. Is it far?

Wife. You never would be able to reach it, and you not getting help on the way.

Rury. You don't know, I suppose, the Witch that owns it, that is said to be the Hag of Slaughter?

Wife. I myself know her, and it's well I know her, and it's I do know her.

Rury. Is she as bad as what they say?

Wife. She is, and worse.

Simon. Sure we got a sketch of her below in the Wood of Wonders; a horned, twisted hag.

Wife. That's not her. The wasting of time does not touch her. She kept her youth through being thorny-hearted and taking an odd sleep through seven years.

Rury. What way will we know her?

Wife. You couldn't know her. When she has a mind she looks as innocent as a little child would be picking strawberries in the grass. She does be coming here often of late.

Simon. To this house?

Wife. The Giant that is turned matchmaker through her means, where her kinsman the Grugach of the Humming is coming looking for a woman of a wife. To put us to the expense of the wedding they will, that will have a year's firing used in a week.

Simon. Is it with the Witch he will go wed?

Wife. He will not, but with the daughter. Much good may it do her! And he having but one foot and one eye, and it in the middle of his head.

Rury. It should be hard for him find a wife.

Wife. Ah, he has the riches. And the girl is no great blood, where her father was but a well-looking Munster man, coaxed the Witch with a sweet note in his voice.

Rury (*putting down bowl and mug*). It is time for us go on towards the Garden.

Wife. Did you get warning of the dangers of the road?

Rury. We got news of them, the Blazing Mountain and the Hill of Spearheads.

Wife. Look now what I will do for you, if I put my own neck in the rope. I would like well that you would get the better of the witch-woman and put an end to her matches and her meddling. Do you see what is there hanging on the wall?

Rury. It is a ball of flax.

Simon. Twisted it is on a crooked holly stick.

Wife. It is not any size at all to be looking at, but it will give out a thousand miles of thread.

Simon. Is it that there is enchantment in it?

Wife. It has that much of a charm it would bring you through all the world. It is the Witch left it there, the way Fatach Mor would be able to go up and down giving her news of the coming of the Grugach, where it is tethered to an apple tree in the Garden. Go throwing it before you, and come up with it as far as it goes.

Rury. It will bring us to that tree?

Wife. As straight as a bullet. It will be a high bridge over fire, and as to the spearheads, you passing over them they will turn their points straight downwards. What, now, do you say to me?

Simon. Very good. It is a man without sense would go climbing a fence would be hard, and a fence would be low and easy being beside him.

Rury. I will tell the King, my father, it was you that saved his life.

Wife. You are welcome, dear, you're welcome. Well, God enable you! And that you may put nettles growing upon the Witch's hearth! (*Three roars heard.*)

Simon. What at all is that?

Wife. It is Himself coming in.

Rury. It is best for us go on. I have no wish to do hurt to your man.

Wife. You are late. He is at the door.

Simon. Put us in hiding till he will be gone.

Wife. Get in here to the chest of bog deal. (*Simon slips in.*)

Rury. I will stop here behind the dresser. I might make a run past.

Wife. You cannot, but wait till I will put him asleep. You can make a leap then out the door.

Giant (*coming in*). I am thinking you gave me a good advice. I am feeling some desire for my meal.

Wife. That is great. What now will I make ready for you?

Giant (*throwing down some heads of cabbage*). I took down a few of the heads are on the forks since yesterday. Let you put them in the pot to boil.

(*Simon who has lifted an inch of the lid of chest shuts it again, terrified.*)

(*Excited.*) Fru, Fra, Fashog! I smell the smell of a melodious lying Irishman!

Wife. Oh no, my dear. It is but a breeze passed over a boat sailing from Connemara and brought a hint of the smoke from the turf.

Giant. I have no mind friends of your own to be coming to pick knowledge of myself and my ways. That is the way they get to lose their respect for us.

Wife. Oh no, but more respect for yourself they would get.

Giant. Give me here the knife. I will be slicing and cutting the heads. (*Simon peeps out again, terrified.*)

(*Turning.*) Fru, Fra, Fashog! I smell the smell of the melodious lying——

Wife. Oh no, my dear. It is but the little root of shamrock I brought in my box, that is blooming out in the green plot abroad in the yard.

Giant. Those men of Ireland are getting too saucy altogether! Look now till you'll see the way I'll take a hold of this by the neck and will cleave it with one stroke!

(*Holds up a cabbage: Simon again tries to peep.*) (*Throwing down cabbage.*) It is lies you are telling me! I am certain I smell the smell!

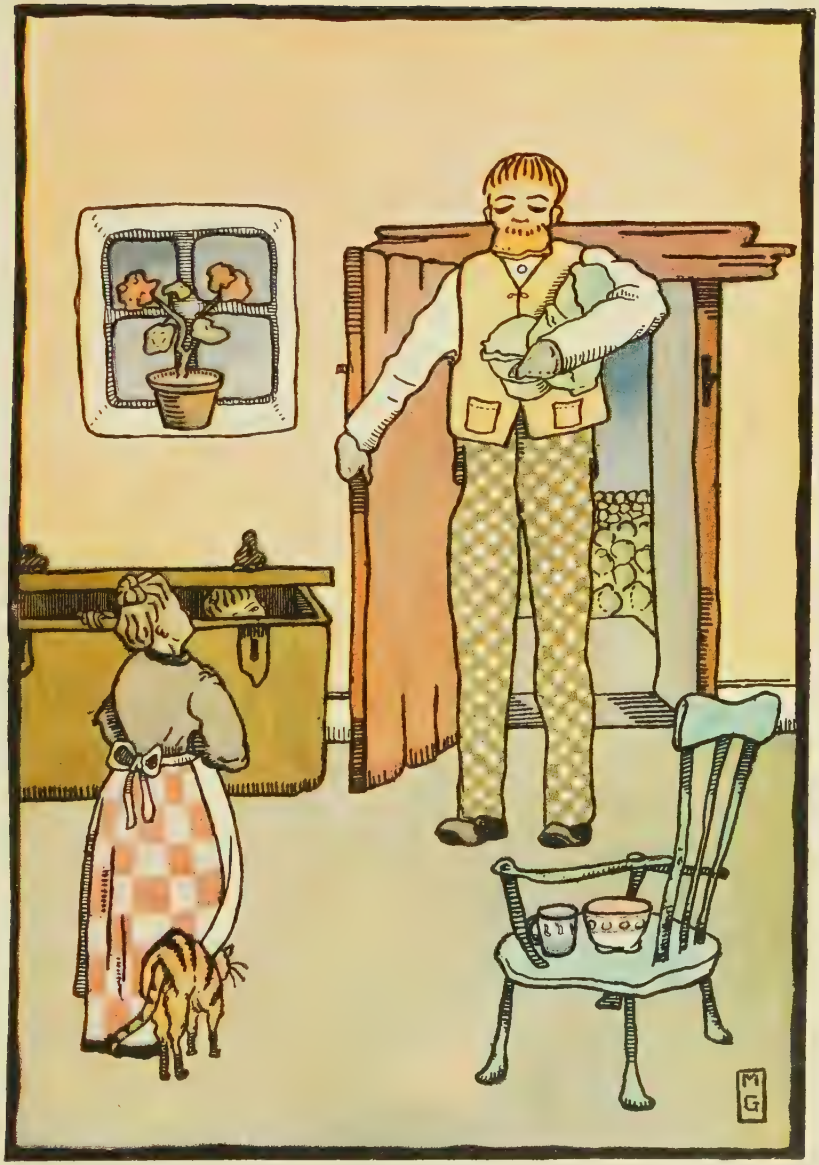
Wife (*putting hand on his arm*). Oh, my dear, I was in dread you would be jealous if I told you. It was a little bird from Ireland perched upon my shoulder a while ago, and I out bleaching the tablecloths for the Grugach's wedding feast. Go out now and put up a few more heads upon the forks before any person will pass by.

Giant. I to mind you I would have my feet wore to flitters running here and there.

Wife. Come over here, my dear, and I will sing you Grania's little sleepy song she used to be crooning over Diarmuid, to soothe him till the dinner would be boiled.

Giant. I will sit down here on the chest.

Wife. No, but come here out of the draught of wind is coming in at the door. (*He sits down in easy-chair.*) Here is a pillow for your head. (*She sits on arm of chair and sings*) "Sleep a little, my blessing on you, my lamb from beside the



"Fru, Fra, Fashog! I smell the smell of a melodious lying Irishman!"

pool; Oh, heart of courage beyond all courage, there is not a woman but envies me to-day."

Giant (*sitting up proudly*). I to fall asleep, waken me with three blows of a hammer from the Forge of the Four-and-twenty Smiths.

Wife. I will, my dear, I will. (*Sings*) "Let your sleep be like the sleep in the east, of the great hero was called the Sluggard. A pair of tongs he had upon his back, and a squealing pig between the two hands of the tongs!"

Giant (*looking up*). If that song puts me to sleep, waken me with letting fall on me a beam from the roof!

Wife. If that doesn't waken you I'll cut the toe off you —(*Sings*) "Let your sleep be like the sleep in the west, of Halfman that carried a churchyard on his back!"

Giant (*looking up*). That is a giant you would call a giant!

Wife (*speaking rapidly*). The best sleep ever he got was through the rattling of an iron candlestick having three branches, and nine apples weighing nine stone upon every branch! (*She takes poker and tongs and rattles them upon iron pot.*)

(*Giant seems to sleep profoundly. During the clamour, Simon scrambles out of chest, and he and Rury go to door. Wife puts down fireirons and waves a hand to them.*)

Simon (*at door*). That was the longest hour that ever was on the hands of the clock!

(*Giant starts up. Rury and Simon rush out of door, locking it after them.*)

Giant. There is some one gone out the door!

Wife. You are dreaming, my dear, through your sleep.

Giant (*at window*). Two of them that are in it!

Wife. Oh, the villains! Go after them and stop them!

Giant. They have the door locked!

Wife. It's easy for you wrench it open.

Giant. I have no time to put on my battle dress.

Wife. You could go a short-cut through the window.

Giant. I wonder at you! You know well to go out of the window I would have to take off my tree-legs—(*Shows stilts under his clothing.*) The people to see me that way, it is likely they would be saying me not to be a real giant!

End of Scene IV., Act I.

Act II. Scene I.

The Garden. Witch and Gardener. The Witch is richly dressed.

Witch (*looking at apple tree.*) The thread is tightening. Some person is coming here having the ball in his hand.

Gardener. It might be Fatach Mor the Giant. It was to him you gave the use of it.

Witch. It is not. I know by the feel of the flax it is a man with a heart of courage has a grip of it.

Gardener. It can be no one but some friend of your own, ma'am, would have the string.

Witch. It is no friend. I know well who it is. If I refuse him the apple, it is likely he will rob it in spite of me. He has robbed me of more than that, more than that. I will lose her. It fails me the strength to cross her. I must give him to her, I will bid her make ready to meet him. My grief that she ever laid an eye on him! He will vex her heart yet. (*Goes* Left.)

Gardener (*looks after Witch and shakes his head*). You have that slip of a daughter too much petted. A peevish colleen, a peevish colleen! It is often a woman cut a rod would beat herself in the end. (*He goes aside.*)

(*Rury and Simon come on* Right.)

Rury. There now at last is the apple!

Simon. I wonder is it of solid gold.

Rury. It is better than that, having healing in it.

Simon. That is so. The health is the only riches.

Rury. What is that shining at the foot of the tree?

Simon. It is but a curl of hair.

Rury. It is shining of itself.

Simon. Pluck down now the apple and come out of this.

Rury. There must be some great beauty in the garden. I will go seek her.

Simon. I am in dread of the Hag. Get the apple and come.

Rury. I am certain I will wed with no other one but the woman that owns this curl.

Simon. Come on now for pity's sake.

Rury. Stop here till I will go look for her among the trees. (*Goes.*)

Witch (*coming in*). It was not you had a hold of the end of the thread?

Simon. It was not, your honour my ladyship. It was my master. He is taking a view of the beauties of the garden.

Witch. What brought him here?

Simon. For a cure he came. A lovely garden it is—a very grand place. I wonder now where is the witch-woman that owns it.

Witch. Would you recognize her if you saw her?

Simon. I would to be sure. Didn't she rise spirits before us in the wood beyond. It isn't easy mistake her. A beauti-

ful lady like yourself, ma'am, would get your death to be looking at her like. A flattened bluish sort of a nose. Hair the same as a horse's tail.

Witch. Is that the way she is?

Simon. The ugliest you would see in the world. You wouldn't be the better of it in a year. Nails like the tips of cows' horns. A greenish tusk shaped like a reaping-hook going back to her ear. Six foot of goat's horn going back from her head.

Witch. That is enough of talk. Tell me this, has your master himself promised to any one?

Simon. He has not. Sure, he is only hardly a boy!

Witch. Has he any secret love?

Simon. He wouldn't look at a woman's face, and Helen to be walking the road from Troy; but at hounds, at the hunting, or horses making their leaps.

Witch. Go, call him here.

Simon. Here he is coming. It is himself will tell your honourable ladyship I am telling no lie.

Rury. I am come to ask for that apple.

Witch. That is a great thing to ask.

Rury. It is for the cure of a wounded king.

Witch. It is for one like yourself it has been waiting, a man with daring and with good luck.

Rury. I am thankful for that word. I will pluck it and bring it away.

Witch. Hold your hand. Whoever will get that apple has one promise to give.

Rury. Tell it out to me.

Witch. He must put himself under bonds to wed with the young girl that is here with it in the garden.

Rury. That is what I would wish, and she being the great beauty I take her to be.

Witch. She is, and better again.

Rury. Tell me where can I get a sight of her.

Witch. Go over west to the butt of a yew tree that is shaped like a table. I will bid her bring you meat and wine.

(*Goes* L., *Rury is going* R.)

Gardener. Come hither, King's son of Ireland!

Rury. I cannot stop.

Gardener. Have a care! Have a care!

Rury. I see nothing to be in dread of.

Gardener. There is a great deal a man should be in dread of and he thinking to take a wife.

Rury. If that is all the danger I will face it.

Gardener. There are some that might be dressed up with all the colours of the birds, might not be as good as one might be wearing a poor girl's suit.

Rury. It is not dress I would think of, beside beauty and courage and sweet speech.

Gardener. That is so. To be mannerly and not to have anything to say with any one, but to carry your own character.

Rury. I must go to the butt of the yew tree.

Gardener. Do not. Stop here behind this cluster of

bushes. It's the young lady herself that is coming, you will see her on the minute.

Rury (*going behind bushes*). There are two coming.

(*Pampogue and Muireann come in.*)

Pampogue. Stop now till I will see my face in the well. (*Looks in.*) Do I look good to-day?

Muireann. You can see the shining of your jewels in the water.

Pampogue. Will you come herding geese for me the time I will be wedded with the King of Ireland's son?

Muireann. If I go it will be for the reason I stop here, the strength of your mother's power.

Pampogue. You are right to be in dread of her. She that can put upon you the shape of a whale of the ocean, or of a midge of the air.

Muireann. That power might not be lasting.

Pampogue. She will have pith and power so long as she owns the Three Rods of Magic and Mastery.

Muireann. Some one who is stronger again might bring them away from her.

Pampogue. They are well hidden. You would never make out where they are.

Muireann. It is likely she keeps them close at hand.

Pampogue. She does not. She thinks no person knows where they are—but I know.

Muireann. How can you know if she did not tell you?

Pampogue. She did not tell me, but I put my eye to the keyhole one night she was talking to the Wizard of the

Withered Knee. She gave them to him wrapped in holly bark. I put my ear to the hole.

Muireann. That was a wrong thing to do.

Pampogue. If I did not do it I would not have heard what she said. "Go, put them," she said, "in the farthest room of the house of the Sidhe that is in the hill of Knockmaa." I have a mind to go look for them myself, the way I will get the mastery over the King of Ireland's son.

Muireann. I will leave down these dishes on the yew tree and go back to my work.

Pampogue. You will not! I would wish you to see the prince who will be my husband, and that you yourself will never get the like of. You can take a view of him, but he will never cast an eye on yourself.

(*A bird sings.*)

Muireann. Listen! There is joy in his little sweet song.

Pampogue. Give me that stone.

Muireann. What do you want with it?

Pampogue. I want it to fire at that bird. (*Throws stone.*)

Muireann. Come on to the yew tree.

Pampogue (*with a scream*). There is a snail! Put your foot on it!

Muireann. No, I will put it among the ivy leaves.

Pampogue (*trying to slap her*). I'll call your owner to give you cruelty, where you will not do my commands. Goose girl! Goose girl! (*Goes mocking.*)

(*Rury and Gardener come on.*)

Gardener. Which now of the two has the seven blessings going along with her?

Rury (*to Muireann*). It is you surely are the young queen.

Muireann. I am daughter and granddaughter and great-granddaughter of kings.

Gardener. It was easy for *him* to recognize the stock of kings.

Muireann. I am kept here in the garden by the malice and treachery of a witch.

Rury. Will you come to be wife of a king and mother of kings to come?

Muireann. What way can I escape from her spells?

Rury. I will bring you away from her power. I will make an end of her.

Gardener. It is hard treatment she should get. To take a poor child up in her hand and to torment her the way she does.

Rury. O! Flower of the raspberry! It is in my heart you are come to harbour. There was never the like of you on the face of the earth! Your shadow only would set all the kings of the world quarrelling.

Muireann. It is empty I would be coming to your house. I that was used to golden vessels, I have not now of the goods of the world but my five brothers only, that are turned to fishes in the well.

Rury. I will make a sunny-house for you thatched with the feathers of the birds! I will put a carpet of silk under your feet.

Muireann. That is the way it was with me, and I in the Court of Spain.

Rury. I will give red wine to the horse you will ride; it is on flowers he will set his golden shoe.

Muireann. If I knew you to have no wife, I would not wed with any man but yourself.

Rury. There is the love of hundreds in your face and there is the promise of the evening star.

Muireann. My face that was sheltered and my hands that were under no weight, only gold rings, are brown with the weather and hard.

Rury. The driven snow on the mountain is nine times blacker than the blackberry beside your whiteness! All the women of the world are rushlights in an iron socket, but you are a candlestick of gold on a queen's table.

Muireann. It is long since I heard talk like that.

Rury. Neither star nor sun shows half as much light as your shadow!

Muireann. I think your name should be Honeymouth out from Ireland.

Rury. When the men of Ireland see me bringing you back to them, their hearts will be under the sole of your shoe.

Muireann. Will you surely bring me there with you?

Rury. I will surely. It is you will make every happy thing happier. All the days of the years to come are waiting for your footstep to tread upon them.

Muireann. To have been under unkindness and reproach for so long and to hear you say those words, it is like

as if the dead quarter of the year is gone by, and the birthday of the spring at hand.

Rury. You are a little silver birch tree all alone upon a rock, washed in the white rays of the moon.

Muireann. I have been alone indeed and as desolate as a bare bush left in a gap.

Rury. There is many a woman would go cranky and bitter under such hardness.

Muireann. There is no hardship coming on me now but I would laugh at it, as happy as the rising sun.

Gardener. Make no delay, King's son. The Witch is coming here. Pluck down the apple and go.

Rury. I will bring this queen-woman with me to my father's house. I must bring her away from danger.

Muireann. Oh yes, bring me away! They will never let me come to you again.

Gardener. She must not quit the garden at this time. There is danger about her on the road. To bring her away you must come again with power that is greater than the power of the Witch.

Rury. If I do not get her I will not leave a head on any one in the place!

Gardener. Listen to the sound of her stick stirring the dead leaves — It is like hammering nails in a coffin. It it not swords can go against that one, but to shoot her with a bullet having three times nine curses on it. Go, do your work, and I will find the secret of her magic. I think I have come near it now.

Muireann. He is maybe right. He has wisdom and knowledge. But oh, isn't it a great pity!

Rury. I will be back with you as swift as the swallow.

Muireann. You will forget me, going away.

Rury. I will never forget you while green grass grows.

Muireann. You will maybe turn away from me, seeing I am not so nice looking as what you think.

Rury. That will happen when it is the shadow of the hollow that will fall upon the side of the hill.

Gardener. Hurry, hurry, it is a long road.

Muireann. Take these little cakes, two of them to eat on the road, and one to bring back to Ireland. I have left on them three drops of honey, where I touched them with three fingers of my hand. And take with them my little pipe of music. I will come to you whenever I hear its call.

Witch's Voice. The bride is gone to the butt of the yew tree. Where is the bridegroom, the King's son of Ireland?

(*Rury and Muireann go out of sight.*)

(*Coming on.*) The bargain is made and the promise given. What are you doing there, Gardener? Where is the King of Ireland's son?

Gardener (*pointing upwards*). Listen, listen!

Witch. What would I listen to?

Gardener. To the talk of the filibines and stairs overhead.

Witch. They have no news or no message for me.

Gardener. I suppose not, I suppose not. They are but crying that the house of the Sidhe is on fire, that is in the hill of Knockmaa.

Witch (*with a shriek*). The hidden house at Knockmaa!

Gardener. The houses of the witches are blazing up, they are crying, and all their furniture and their goods!

Witch. My Rods of Magic and Mastery that are in it! Ochone, my grief! (*She rushes off.*)

Gardener. That was a lucky lie. She will go out on the wind to Knockmaa. The bands of death on her, and whatever part of her the crows will not eat, let the dogs of the wilderness devour!

(*Rury and Muireann come back.*)

Rury (*kissing her*). My hundred loves, my share of the world!

Muireann. Oh dear black head!

(*Rury plucks the apple from the tree and goes.*)

End of Scene I., Act II.

Act II. Scene II.

Same room in the Giant's castle. Giant sitting in high easy chair with pillows and medicine bottles. A catapult in his hand.

Wife (*at door*). Here is the doctor after coming from the King of Ireland's Court.

Giant. Wait a minute. (*Fires a stone through window.*) I was just taking aim with my catapult at a pet blackbird is perched on the shoulder of an enemy I have out in the far-off Indies. Could the King of Ireland now do that much?

Doctor (*pompously*). He being a King has no need doing that sort of thing for himself, where he has his ships and his armies to go torment and put down his enemies.

Giant (*dropping catapult*). May be so— It should be a very nice thing to be a King of armies.

Doctor. I cannot be losing time stopping here from the side of the King's bed. What is it ails you?

Giant. Slack enough in the health I am. Some weeks fair enough and some weeks no action— Has the King now any sickness on him of that sort?

Doctor. The King is on the broad of his back, last harvest was a year.

Wife. Let you put a face on yourself and speak up to the doctor.

Giant. On and on sickly I am. A day in bed—a day out of bed.

Doctor. Do you go walking or leaping or running, for to give exercise to your limbs?

Giant. I do—sometimes. Herself that sent me but yesterday gathering kippeens.

Wife. If I did, you did not bring in enough of them to make a crow's nest.

Giant. It is the way I spent the time, knotting trees together. It is as good for me bring in the whole forest at the one time.

Doctor. Have you the appetite lost?

Giant. That is the most thing ails me.

Doctor (*to wife*). You have a right to boil down old hens for him. But maybe hens is nothing to a giant. What now are you used to take at your meal?

Giant (*taking hold of book*). Oh, I might bring in a wild boar for my dinner and draw it through the ashes and leave nothing of the four quarters of it but the bones. Or to tear a bullock in two halves, and to boil the one half of it and roast the other half, and devour them bit about.

Wife. Don't be showing off now. Tell out your case fair and plain.

Doctor. I would wish to look at your tongue.

Giant (*standing up*). Bridget, put up here the stepladder for the doctor.

Wife. That you may be forgiven!

Giant. Would you put him to the trouble to make a staircase, cutting notches in the backs of my legs.

(*Doctor climbs ladder and looks at tongue.*)

Doctor (*coming down*). To give up using so much meat you should. It is too much blood it is making. Wait now till I will notch on an elder stick the diet for your days. Not more now than one sucking pig for breakfast; and for dinner, one quarter of beef; and at supper, a sheep boiled in cow's milk. (*Giant gives a groan.*) Or two sheep—not to be too hard on you in the commencement. I will stop and see you eating this day's meal myself.

Giant. That would be too troublesome; it would be hardly worth while change my diet between this and the feast I will be giving in a few days for the wedding of the Grugach of the Humming.

Wife. Ah, give over fooling. What ails you not to speak out the truth to a doctor that should know what you eat as well as if he was inside you?

Giant. I am not willing.

Wife. I tell you it doesn't signify giving out your case to a doctor that is bound under bonds to betray your secret to no other one.

Giant. One person to know it, and you to know him to know it, is the same as if it was known to all the world.

Wife. He is ashamed telling you meat does not suit him. His talk of boars and of bullocks are from the stories and vanities of the books. He does not use but a pot of stirabout

"Would you put him to the trouble to make a staircase, cutting notches in the backs of my legs?"

in the morning and a hen's egg, maybe, for kitchen with his barley bread at night.

Giant. A goose's egg! A goose's.

Doctor. I knew well he was but humbugging and talking foolishly.

Wife. You need not be making little of him on the head of it. It does not lessen his courage if he uses no meat, he having a weak stomach, since the time he was a child.

Doctor. Give me a hold of your pulse. It is much if I do not put you under a curse of blisters for striving to hide from me your case.

Wife. There is some doctors who can recognize what sickness is on a man by the smoke they see going out of the chimney of his house. I knew of one could tell it by measuring you.

Doctor (*sarcastically*). He would! Or by the colour of your hair.

Giant. It is a hard thing I to use so little, not like some would-be gluttonous, and to have that pain and depression on my chest.

Doctor. Does the pain be leaping from side to side?

Giant. It does.

Doctor. There does be no leaping at some times, but quiet?

Giant. That is so.

Doctor. I knew well I would come at it. It is in great danger you are. Did you ever go asleep in a meadow, and

your mouth to be open, and you to be stretched alongside a running stream?

Giant. It is likely I might.

Doctor. I was sure of that. It is what I am thinking, you have swallowed a water-worm or an eel.

Giant. Do you say so?

Doctor. That is what is destroying you.

Giant. So it will be too. It to be growing in bulk within me till it will get to be the size of a sea-serpent, and I myself getting to be as thin as thin!

Doctor. When he does be uneasy, the place being strange to him, that is the time you feel the pain.

Giant. That's it! That it is.

Doctor. And the time he does be quiet is the time he does be consuming everything that you will eat.

Giant. I felt it—I can nearly hear it! It is leaping in me the same as a little bird!

Wife. What way will you do a cure on him?

Doctor. I will lay my mind now to that. (*A knock at door.*)

Giant. Who at all is this?

Wife. I wouldn't wonder it to be the Witch.

Doctor. Is it the Hag of Slaughter? It is best for me go back out of this.

Giant. No, but stop there alongside the hearth till she will be gone, and you can work on me my cure. She will not meddle with you at all.

Witch (*coming in*). Death and destruction on you,

Fatach Mor, where you parted with my ball of thread to a thief!

Wife. There you have your answer. If it was a thief got it, it was a thief took it.

Giant. What was it he stole?

Witch. He stole more than riches. There is one thing he stole will fall heavy upon yourself.

Giant. What now is that?

Witch. He has taken my daughter's fancy. She would give him her share of the world and herself along with it. He has stolen her love.

Wife. Why would that fall heavy on Fatach Mor?

Witch. She has her mind made up not to marry and wed with the Grugach of the Humming, since she threw her eye on one of the world's men.

Giant. Is it that she will break off the match?

Witch. That is what I am telling you.

Wife. There will be no need, so, for us to make ready the supper and the feast. You can put him off on the long finger.

Giant. Do you want to make an end of me altogether? The Scotch are no way favourable to deal with, and they are apt to be tricky in the finish, not getting their own way.

Wife. Find him another wife so.

Giant. That is not so easy as you think. If he is no way handsome himself, he expects the youngest and the grandest in the world.

Witch. It is well you have earned trouble, and it to fall on you, where you gave a harbour to the King of Ireland's son.

Doctor (*coming forward*). Is it that you are acquainted with the King of Ireland's son?

Giant. To steal my ball of flax he did, and made his escape through that side door.

Witch. He has stolen another thing. The Golden Apple from the Tree of Power.

Doctor. He has got that?

Witch. To snap it away he did, and to go.

Doctor. He brought away the apple of healing?

Witch. If he did I will get it back again. It is for that I am come here. This road is partly on his way home. Let you make a trap for him.

Giant. Myself is it?

Witch. He will be in need of provision. I have the money in his purse changed into pebbles of flint. It is likely he will turn up to this door.

Giant. I have no mind to see him at all. Let him go on his way.

Witch. I thought to get more thankfulness after all I have done for you, promising my own daughter to your kinsman.

Giant. That promise is broke. He to come here itself it is likely he would refuse me the apple.

Witch. He will refuse it surely. It is to fight him you must.

Giant. I have no mind to go join in other people's quarrels.

Witch. All you want is the courage. You are well able

to best him. He is but a lad. No sign of a beard on him unless he would paint himself with blackberry juice.

Giant. What way can I go killing and fighting, and a live worm being within me, is leaping on every side?

Doctor. Are you looking for a certain cure?

Giant. Why would I send for you if I was not?

Doctor. There is but one cure for you to be found. Not having it, you will waste and wither and be that water-worm's prey.

Giant. Give it to me without delay.

Doctor. It is that apple that is after being stole.

Giant. What use is that, and it not being in my hand?

Doctor. You have to fight and put down the man that has it.

Giant. Wouldn't some other apple do?

Doctor. If you set no value on your own life I may as well say good-bye to you.

Witch. I will go bring the young lad a challenge from you. It is not long till he will blow the horn of battle at the door. (*Goes.*)

Giant. I will refuse! To force me is no fair play.

Doctor (*to Wife, putting on hat*). He will not be long with you. But you will be free from the cost of burying him, for you will find no coffin will fit himself and the water-worm. It is best throw them into the tide. (*Is going.*)

Giant. Do not go! I'll make an attack on him! I'll put him down, if he is a king's son! I'll devour him first and the apple after!

Doctor. No, but to do that would destroy you entirely. The monster is within you would get strength by that, and the lengthening of life. He will live to the womb of judgment! It is to me myself you have to give the apple.

Giant. And what way will you rid me of him?

Doctor. To eat bacon and herrings and every salty thing you should, till there will be a great drought on him, and to lie down on the grass outside, and your mouth to be open, and the apple convenient to it.

Giant. What will happen me then?

Doctor. To go wild mad with the drouth he will; getting the smell of the apple that is full of juice, he will make a leap out of your mouth, and, believe me, he will never enter into it again.

Giant. That is a great plan now.

Wife. Can you find no other way to cure him? A great shame and a great pity the lad to have gone through such hardships for the apple, and not to bring it home to his father after all, that is lying at the point of death. There must have been great need on the King when he sent the man is dearest to him in the world into such danger for his sake.

Giant. That's the way with the wife I have, thinking of every other person's health before my own.

Wife. Have you no kindness in you at all?

Giant. It would be an unkind man would not be kind to his own life. (*Horn of battle is heard.*)

Doctor. Here is he coming! It is best for me not to be seen. I would not wish to be taking a side.

Giant. Is it after shoving me into danger that you will not lend me a hand?

Doctor. I have here some ointment. I will rub it upon the boards. Let you drive him out this door, and it will be easy knock him. (*Rubs near door,* RIGHT.)

Wife. A black shame on you. That you may die hard and die as you deserve it!

(*Horn heard again. Doctor hides. Wife opens door,* LEFT. *Rury and Simon come in.*)

Giant (*standing up*). Did you take notice of those forks outside?

Rury. I did not.

Giant. Every one of them having a head on it but the one that is waiting for your head.

Rury. Is it my head or your own head that will go on the top of that spike?

Giant. Give me up the apple you are after stealing, and I will let you go free out of this.

Rury. I will give you nothing at all, only a green sod over your head!

Giant. Come on till I will put you under my long cold teeth!

Rury. Don't be thinking it's on feather beds I'll put yourself the time I will bring you down!

Giant. I think you too big for one mouthful and not big enough for two mouthfuls! It is snuff I will make of your bones.

Rury. There are three shares of dread on you and not a share at all upon myself!

Giant. It is boiled blood I will be drinking with my supper to-night!

Simon. Go on, Rury, go on! I will come behind and tickle his ankles till he will stoop down to be scratching them!

Giant. Is it fighting on fiery flagstones you are used to, or sticking red-hot knives into one another's hearts?

Rury. It is with this sword I will fight, that was cooled with three drops of lions' blood!

Giant. So I have a sword of my own that nothing can stand against! I am after drawing it through the heart of the last man of three hundred!

Simon. Go on, till we'll see Prince Rury's noble white silken feet go up, and your big ugly feet go down!

Rury. Come on, now!

Giant. Go, take your stand on that spot beside the door!

Rury. No, but it is yourself I will put out through the door!

Simon. If it fails you to knock him, try can you stagger him! (*Tries in vain to tickle stilts.*) There is great stand in him.

Giant. If you are a half of the world, I am three quarters of the world!

Simon. Make a ball of him till his toes will be telling mischief and misfortune into the holes of his ears!

Giant (*with a roar*). Make ready the big pot to boil him in!

(*Rury rushes at him. Giant backs through door*, L., *Rury and Simon rush after him. A heavy fall is heard and roar. They come back dragging Giant by the stilts.*)

Rury. It is much if I give you your choice of two sods of the earth to die on!

Simon. That's it! Tie him with the five knots!

Giant. Leave me my life and I will give you my sword that will cut through a black stump of a log!

Rury. I see nothing blacker or uglier than your own head! (*Lifts sword.*)

Simon. Strike the head off him! Put the cold of the sword to the marrow after that, till it will freeze and be scalded with cold!

Wife. As you are strong, be merciful!

Rury. Do you give in altogether?

Giant. I give you the victory and my seven thousand curses!

Rury. Didn't you know I was a Connacht man?

Simon. It's as good for you to kill him out and out.

Wife. Do not. There is no great harm in him except of a time he would be showing off. Ask mercy now and promise better behaviour.

Giant. If I am a third of the world, yourself is the half of the world. Let me off now and I'll give my seven oaths I will never lay a cross finger on you again.

Rury. I am satisfied so. I am in a hurry to go on my way.

(*Rury is going out quickly by* R. *door. He slips and falls with a cry. The apple rolls out. Doctor steals from corner and seizes it while Wife and Simon stoop to help Rury.*)

Simon. It is the ankle is twisted on him. Rise up now if you can.

Wife. Come out here, Doctor, and do your best for him.

Doctor. It is best bring him out by the side of the road and put a bed of green rushes under him.

(*He puts apple in his pocket and goes to door*, RIGHT, *as they help Rury to rise and go out*, LEFT.)

Giant (*mournfully*). He brought away the apple in the heel!

Doctor. You are not in need of it. I have the worm banished in another way. Believe me, you will not feel it leaping any more.

(*Steals out quickly as Rury is helped out at other door.*)

End of SCENE II., ACT II.

Act II. Scene III.

A roadside. Rury sitting up, half leaning on the grass. Simon looking at him.

Simon. You are not fit to rise up at all, with weakness and want of sleep.

Rury. I have too much time lost. We must go on our journey home to Ireland.

Simon. I don't know at all what was it knocked you.

Rury. It is the floor was as slippery as the flesh of eels.

Simon. No wonder you to be left in a weakness, lying by the road out through the clouds of night.

Rury. Were we here all through the night-time?

Simon. We were till the night kissed the dawn, and beyond that again. There is red showing now in the evening sky.

Rury. It is far from my darling I will see the dawn of every day!

Simon. I would wish us to be farther again, and our back to the garden and all that we have gone through.

Rury. I am lonesome after her. I to have seen her once it is a pity I do not see her every minute.

Simon. It is lonesome enough I am myself. Lonesome after my supper I am.

Rury. Full or fasting we must go on till we bring the cure to my father.

Simon. I would like well to be in the King's house, but I would not like to be travelling to it. It's there you would not be hungry or dry!

Rury. It is time for us set out.

Simon. What ails you to be in such a hurry? Is it that the King gave you for a mother the wind of March? I wonder now what are they eating for their meal at this time? Roasted pork with the cracklings, black puddings, and rounds of beef.

Rury. Barley bread would be enough to give us strength if we but had it.

Simon. There is an old story carrying among people, that when a prince went meeting enchantments he would be apt to be given a tablecloth would be covered with every choice food, boiled and ready. Ah, what am I talking about. I'd be in heaven having a sheep's trotter in my hand, and a bit of a sixpenny loaf.

Rury. Why wouldn't you traffic for food in some place, and then we will go on.

Simon. Give me the purse so. If ever I get the chance of food again I will eat my seven enoughs!

Rury. Here it is. (*Gives purse.*)

Simon (*opening it*). What happened the money! What now is this!

Rury (*looking*). There is nothing but pebbles of flint.

Simon. As sure as you're living that is an enchantment put upon us by the Witch!

Rury. It is gone, whatever happened.

Simon. We may as well, so, give in to famine. We'll be that thin by morning they can play cards with our corpses at the wake.

Rury. Give me my little crossbow. It might chance me to make a shot at a wild duck or at a swan. (*Goes off.*)

Simon. Don't make little of a crane itself, or a marten cat or a coney. I think that I have stood upon the hungry grass. (*Listens, then calls out.*) Come back now! I hear the trots of horses! There is a knot of people coming.

(*Voices heard and some well-to-do people come in. Simon has sunk down on the roadside, swaying his body.*)

1st Stranger. Is this the path leading to the house of Fatach Mor the Giant?

Simon. It is—I believe.

1st Stranger. Is it far?

Simon. It is not.

1st Stranger (*to others*). Come on so, we'll be there as soon as the Grugach of the Humming.

2d Stranger. He came sooner than was thought. It is a wedding in a hurry it will be.

1st Stranger. It may be there will be no wedding at all in it. They were telling me below in the drinking tent, it has failed the Giant to find him a wife.

2d Stranger. It is a bad man to anger he should be. It is to cut the head off of the guests he might.

1st Stranger. No but another was saying the Hag of Slaughter has taken it in hand, and has her promise given to find him one that will be to his liking.

2d Stranger. So long as the supper is ready and the music, we are all right, bride or no bride. I'll chance it. Come on.

(*Simon gives a low keen.*)

1st Stranger. What is on you?

Simon. Enough of trouble is on me, where the King's son of Ireland is after meeting with his death.

1st Stranger. Is that so! The King's son dead?

Simon. In this far foreign place. No one to keen him or to lay him out, because of his own people being far away.

1st Stranger. We will turn aside and go three steps with the corpse.

Simon. It is a good way from this, a half a day's journey —in the wide middle of a bog.

1st Stranger. We cannot go so far. We have to be at the Giant's house by supper-time.

Simon. What signifies, what signifies? It is not company he will want going home to the Court and Castle of the King. All the strands of Ireland will be fretting after him till they will go down and be lost under the tide. But to leave him the first night with no one to wake him, in the middle of a bog!

1st Stranger. Are there no neighbours to call in?

Simon. Turf-cutters and chair-makers I could call, and I having food and drink to give them. But I never would be willing to call any one to a hungry wake!

2d Stranger. I will give you something for that and welcome. Here is meat and bread.

Simon. To lay him out I would wish as a King's son —a bag of gold under his head, a bag of silver under his feet.

Strangers. Here, take this, and this, and this (*they give him money*) for the King of Ireland's sake. If it was not for dread of the Grugach and the Giant we would travel with you every foot of the way. (*They go.*)

Simon (*calling after them*). It is not losing money you are, giving it this time! It is well it will be remembered in Ireland. (*Sound of crows cawing as they go away.*) Go on with your cawing, ye thieves of the air! Is it looking for the dead prince ye are? Is it that ye will tell that story out to the world at large?

Witch (*coming in dressed as a harper*). Who is it you are waiting for, Bird-Alone?

Simon. My master that is gone fowling. He is not gone far. Why now are you yourself and your harp going away from the great feast, and every other one facing towards it?

Witch. So I was in it. I will maybe go back after a while.

Simon. What way is the Giant?

Witch. Middling only. I heard some talk of a fight he had.

Simon. Sure it is with my own master he had it. It was my master beat him. It is on the head of an apple the fight was.

Witch. He is letting on he won the day.

Simon. What way did he win the day when he did not win the Golden Apple?

Witch. Has your master got the apple with him yet?

Simon. He has, to be sure. Where it was before, within in the pocket of his body-coat.

Witch. He should be tired with all he went through.

Simon. He is and spent. His heart will rise when he has food taken. It is a great pity they left me no wine.

Witch. You can buy it down below. There is wine and beer selling in a little cabin made of green branches to refresh the people are on their way to the Giant's feast.

Simon. I wouldn't wonder but they'd want it, the Giant's wife being no great housekeeper.

Witch. Go on now for it.

Simon. Here is my master coming. (*Rury comes.*)

Rury. All I got was this cormorant. (*Throws it down.*)

Simon. That much wouldn't take the hunger off us. See now am I a good forager on the road! See what I got myself, with no weapon at all—only lies. (*Gives him food.*) I will go now get wine that will hearten you.

Rury. Let you hasten so. We have enough of time lost.

(*Simon goes.*)

Witch. I will rise a tune for you, King of Ireland's son.

Rury (*lying down on the grass and eating*). I never refused music up to this; but let it be a short tune. (*Witch lays down harp, it begins playing of itself.*)

Witch (*in a drowsy tone*). Play, little harp of willow wood, that lived sleepy with love of your own likeness and your shadow in the stream— Play on! Give the Prince rest for a while. Play every one of you, strings (*she waves her hands over Rury*) that were drawn from the beasts rocking in the slumberous sounds of the sea. Play a little song would put him in his sleep through the sawing of timber in a pit, or the screeches from the Island of Cold. (*Rury sleeps profoundly. Witch kneels and searches his clothes. She gets up.*) It is not here! The apple is not here! They are all deceiving me! The Giant is deceiving me; he has maybe got it in his house. I'll tear it from his keeping! I'll master him! (*She rushes off, leaving harp, which goes on playing softly.*)

(*Muireann comes in. She has her arms out as if distracted. She is dressed in rich clothes.*)

Muireann. Where is he! Where is he? Where is Rury, my darling that is dead!— Oh! He is there! The crows of the air were telling no lie saying you were dead and gone! (*She keens and makes her lament.*) Oh, Rury! Oh, my first love! My first darling of the men of the world! There is no night in the year I would not burn a penny candle looking at your beauty! It is what I will be bring-

ing with me from this out, the full of my two shoes of sorrow!

The first day of summer will come, the first day of winter will come. Every bird will come back to its own nest, but Rury my darling will not come back to me for ever!

It is a withered world it is! It is not long I will stay living in it. I to be left my alone, the same as the last tree of a wood! Let the two of us be laid in the one grave!

Good-bye to you, my five little fishes. (*She takes fishes which are tied in a bunch hanging by her waist.*) I am thinking you will not live after me. It is near a pity I did not leave you where you were in the well. My grief! If I had but the loan of a little silver lake!

Simon (*coming back*). The King of Spain's daughter! What in the world wide brought you here, ma'am, and what is it ails you?

Muireann. The birds overhead that told me the King's son of Ireland was dead.

Simon. You grew to be very skilful picking knowledge from the air.

Muireann. What are you yourself doing, not to be crying and keening him? It is a bad friend and a bad servant you are letting him die! You to have had the smallest wound in the world, he would have searched out herbs of healing to put round about you. Why did it fail you to go search the whole face of the world for a cure for the King's son?

"Play, little harp of willow wood, that lived sleepy with love of your own likeness and your shadow in the stream——"

Simon. Is it that you think it is to die he done? He did not, but a fit of slumber that came upon him.

Muireann. Why did the birds say it?

Simon. Chatterers they are, running telling that I said him to be dead. If I did, I was letting on all the time.

Muireann. You had no right even for a playgame to say out such a terrible thing!

Simon. I not to have said it, it is likely it would be true before this. I gave out his death for to keep life in him.

Muireann. He will not move. What way can I believe you?

Simon. He is but getting his quiet and his comfort in a fit of slumber that came on him after eating his meal. There is no harm at all in that. The sleep is the health of all. He to be awake, there is no knowing what battle or fight he might be in!

Muireann. It fails me to waken him in any way.

Simon. I wouldn't wonder if it was the playing of that harp. (*Takes it and covers with a cloak.*) More enchantments! I having a bit of tow in my ear against the toothache it did not take the same effect upon myself.

Muireann. Waken, Rury! You will waken when you hear my voice!

Simon (*shaking him*). Rise up now and see who is before you!

Muireann. Listen, listen, I am in great danger. It is the Witch that dragged me as far as this. She bade me

put on good clothes— She said it was to meet you I was coming. And then—

Simon. What plan had she in her head?

Muireann. Rury! Waken! Help me! I heard her telling some person a while ago she was bringing me to be a wife to the Grugach that her own daughter had refused to wed.

Simon. The curse of the crows on her! Isn't she the black villain!

Muireann. She left me under a bush of shelter in the valley beyond; it is there I heard the talk of the birds. She will be coming back. Rise up now out of your sleep!

Simon. Rise up, indeed. I am in dread the Giant is not asleep.

Muireann. Did I give you my love and will you fail me? (*He moves.*) (*A roar is heard.*)

Simon (*looking down the road*). That is the Giant, sure enough. I partly guessed his roar.

Muireann. They are coming! Oh, save him if they take me! Cover him over with branches or with grass! Here I will put my golden mitten in your hand, that you will know I was with you——

Giant (*coming in with Witch*). Is it this one is to be given to the Grugach?

Witch. It is. Let him take her or leave her.

Giant. It is easy matchmaking there will be, and she to be put into my hand.

Witch. There is the King's son in his sleep on the grass.

Giant. I have nothing to say to him. I am under bonds not to do him hurt or harm. Let him sleep on through the length of the year.

Witch. Bring away the girl so.

Giant. Well now you have spared me a good deal of trouble. She has a lovely face. (*To Muireann.*) Come on now.

Muireann. Do not bring me away! Leave me here! I would sooner go to my death.

Giant. The guests are come and the tables are spread. There is nothing wanting, only yourself. I will lift you into the air the same as a wisp of straw. (*Giant and Girl go.*)

Muireann (*heard calling*). Rury! Rury! Rury!

Rury (*stirring*). Who is that calling me?

Simon. The Lord be praised he didn't waken sooner. He'd be made an end of surely, and he to go following after them the way he is.

Rury. There was some one calling me by my name.

Simon. Ah! It was dreaming you were, or listening to the grasshoppers in the grass.

Rury. I am certain I heard a call. It was nearly like Muireann's voice.

Simon. It is close to the fall of night. Come on now on your journey.

Rury. Muireann! How happy I would be if I was going back to her now—to find her by the brink of the well.

Simon. Is it that you are forgetting the King that is watching the windows till he will see you come?

Rury. You are right. I must go on to him. I will give him the cure. I will set out again the very same day.

Simon. You might or you might not. Every new meeting is a new bargain. I would be wary of going back again into the Witch's garden, where she might chop a tree against your life. It might be best find some other young beauty on our own side of the world.

Rury. I have but to give him the apple of healing. I can turn my back then, my message being done.

Simon. Fatach Mor had a great opinion of himself, thinking to take it from you.

Rury. Where is it? I put it in here——

Simon. It was in no other place. (*They search.*) A sore heart and cold flesh on them! As sure as you are standing there they have the apple whipped.

Rury. The Witch, or Giant, or whoever took it must have snapped it away as quick as a hawk.

Simon. As sure as you live it was stole by that little cannat of a doctor. It is going through me that he was near us at that fight.

Rury. It might be so. I thought I saw some unkind face through my faint. But why would he rob it?

Simon. To bring it home to the King I'll engage, and to let on he to have won it himself. It's best for us hurry on after him by the shortest road, that is here by this path to the west.

Rury. We should overtake him if we travel on through the night.

Simon. We'll make a start anyway.

Rury. Give me my sword. What is that on it? A little golden mitten——

Simon. So it is too.

Rury. It was she left it here. She was surely here in this place.

Simon. It might have come in some other way.

Rury. It was her call I heard! Where is she? You know, and you do not tell me! She was here when I was asleep!

Simon. Leave choking me! If I did not tell you it was for your good. You are no way fit to go fighting. If you have no wish to be scalded it's best not go stir the pot.

Rury. Where is she? Tell me or I will drive the life out of you!

Simon. The Giant that brought her away to his castle.

Rury. Why did he do that?

Simon. It was that Hag of Wickedness put her into his hands.

Rury. What made her do it?

Simon. She gave her to be bride to the Grugach of the Humming, that her own daughter was after refusing to wed.

Rury. Oh, my first love! I am coming! (*He goes following her.*)

Simon. I would give the full of Ireland of horned cattle, the lad never to have learned the nature of love!

End of SCENE III., ACT II.

Act II. Scene IV.

Night. Outside Giant's castle. A lighted window. Guests seen inside and music heard.

Rury and Simon come on.

Rury. It is up there she should be at the supper.

Simon. It would be hard come to her. There is a great troop of men having steel suits on them beside the door.

Rury. I will break my way through them.

Simon. What way could you do that, and they that close as that they are touching one another?

Rury. If I have to kill them I will do enough of killing! I will make heaps of their feet and of their heads.

Simon. You would be no better off. You to lay a hand on the young lady it is likely the Hag has put spells on her that she would go from you like a bird into the air.

Rury. If I could but bring her down out of that and steal her away——

Simon. Here is some person coming out the door; he maybe would give us news of her.

Rury. It is but a cook from the ovens.

Simon. If he is, he might be no bad friend.

Rury (*to Cook*). What is it that is going on inside?

Cook. It is a great wonder you not to know this is the night of the great wedding. A grand quality dinner that is in it. The freshest of every meat, the oldest of every drink, the food you think of and the food you would not think of. Myself and the rest of the cooks are destroyed making and baking and with the want of sleep.

Simon. I never saw much in that house. You'd get more plenty of a fast day in the King of Ireland's servants' hall, and you but a party of one.

Rury. Are there many in it?

Cook. There are that. The Grugach out from Scotland and two of his first cousins. Fatach Mor is but a chicken beside them.

Simon. He has a bad name that Grugach of the Humming.

Cook. He'd be a bad one to cross or go against. But as they are now, himself and the Giant are as great as two pickpockets. Sure it is the Giant has found a wife for him.

Rury. She will not wed with him.

Cook. If she does it will not be of her own fancy. Any lady in Ireland that would rear a son to that one would be sorry.

Rury. Does she seem to be fretting?

Cook. She looks as if she would sooner to go drown herself than to be joined to the like of him. She was crying a while ago, but they have her sorrow hid with the dint of the music they have raised.

Simon. The Grugach now, is he striving to come around her and to comfort her?

Cook. He is not. He is picking the bones of a deer. He'll have time enough to tame her. Himself and his men will bring her away to-morrow in their fleet of ships to Lochlann, or some place in the North.

Rury. Will you carry a message to her?

Cook. I cannot do that. I have to go trying the ovens. There is not a tint of bread left in the place. That I may be forgiven for the lies I told! It is the hungriest feast ever I saw.

Rury. I have here three cakes of bread. Will you bring them in and give them to the young queen?

Cook. I will not. It is a kish full of them I would want to satisfy those.

Rury. I would give you a good reward.

Cook. What use would it be to me and I after being made an end of maybe by the Giant or the Hag of Slaughter, where they would think me to be making a mockery of them?

Rury. Give me your clothes and I will bring them up myself.

Cook. Give me the reward and I will.

Rury. Give him out money from your purse.

Simon. Is it to hide yourself under a cook's suit you think to do?

Rury. That is the way I will go unknownst through the door.

Cook. It is short till they will make an end of you and they to recognize you. A great troop of the Grugach's people there are; Fawgauns and Blue Men.

Simon. I'm in dread that by the walk of you they will know you to be one used to giving orders.

Cook. Let the clothes be put on yourself, so, that is more of my own shape and build.

Simon. I don't care. I'll engage no one will lay down that I am not a cook. I'll go in, sooner than send my master to his death.

Cook. Here now. I'll rub a grain of flour on your face.

(*Simon puts on smock and cap.*)

Rury. Give her the cakes into her hand—whisper in her ear to come down as if to take the air. I will bring her away in a crack.

Cook (*to Rury*). Go back now, let no person see you watching here.

Rury (*going off*). She will know the three honey-drops on the cakes.

Simon. Is it to knock at the door or to blow the horn I should?

Cook. Not at all, but to walk in fair and easy and they will not question you. (*Cook goes off.*)

(*Simon is going towards door; the men at it fall back. Witch comes out in full dress.*)

Witch. What is your business here?

Simon. A cook. I am one of the Fatach Mor's cooks.

Witch. What is that in your hand?

Simon. Three caraway cakes they are I have to bring to the young queen of the feast.

Witch. Take care is there honey on them?

Simon. Why wouldn't there be honey?

Witch. The hall that is guarded with a swarm of very wicked bees.

Simon. Do you say so?

Witch. You can nearly hear their buzz. To go wild mad at the smell of honey they do. They will settle themselves down upon your hands and your eyes and your head.

Simon. There is nothing I am in so great dread of as bees.

Witch. It is best for you to wash the honey from off the cakes.

Simon. I am loth to meddle with them.

Witch. Go on so. There is one of the Blue Men after drowning himself in the stream, where he had hid a piece of a honeycomb within his cap. To crawl in they did under his steel suit.

Simon. What way can I wipe it off?

Witch. Here is a handkerchief; it was dipped in soapy water.

Simon. That's it. (*He wipes off honey.*) Is there anything of the smell of it left on the cakes?

Witch. I will bring you in now. The bees will take no notice of you at all. (*They go in.*)

(*Rury comes back, looks up at window. Muireann has come near it. Music is being played. Simon hands her the cakes; she looks at them, then pushes them away. Simon comes out from the door.*)

Simon. I brought the cakes to her.

Rury. I saw that, and she would not take them. Did she say nothing?

Simon. She did not, and no wonder. Believe me, it is a very strange company she is in.

Rury. Did she take notice of the honey-drops on the cakes?

Simon. The honey-drops?

Rury. That were from her fingers she laid upon them.

Simon. You had a right to tell me that sooner.

Rury. Why do you say that? What happened them?

Simon. To wipe them off I did at the bidding of a queen-woman, that said I would be tackled and made an end of by a swarm of angry bees.

Rury. Will you never learn to know the Hag of Slaughter?

Simon. For pity's sake! There is no beating that one for plans. It is a wonder that she, having hundreds of years, can go through the world as she does!

Rury. I will go in to Muireann myself.

Simon. It's no use for you; it's not by weapons you'll reach to her, but by wit. If you wish to bring her down to where you are, give out mouth-music on the pipe.

Rury. That is a good thought. (*He plays "Eileen Aroon" on pipe. Muireann comes and stands at window, looks out, then turns to the door.*)

Simon. There she is coming.

Rury. I will go meet her.

Simon. Have a care!

Rury. I am done with carefulness. (*Goes towards door playing still. Two men suddenly step behind and fling a cloak over his head, throw him down and drag him away. Simon rushes to shadow at side.*)

Muireann (*coming out from door*). Rury! Rury! Where are you! (*She comes forward, her arms outstretched.*) Save me! Save me!

Witch (*coming behind her and touching her arm*). Do you think to escape me so easy?

Muireann. I will escape? The King of Ireland's son is here. He will save me out of your hand.

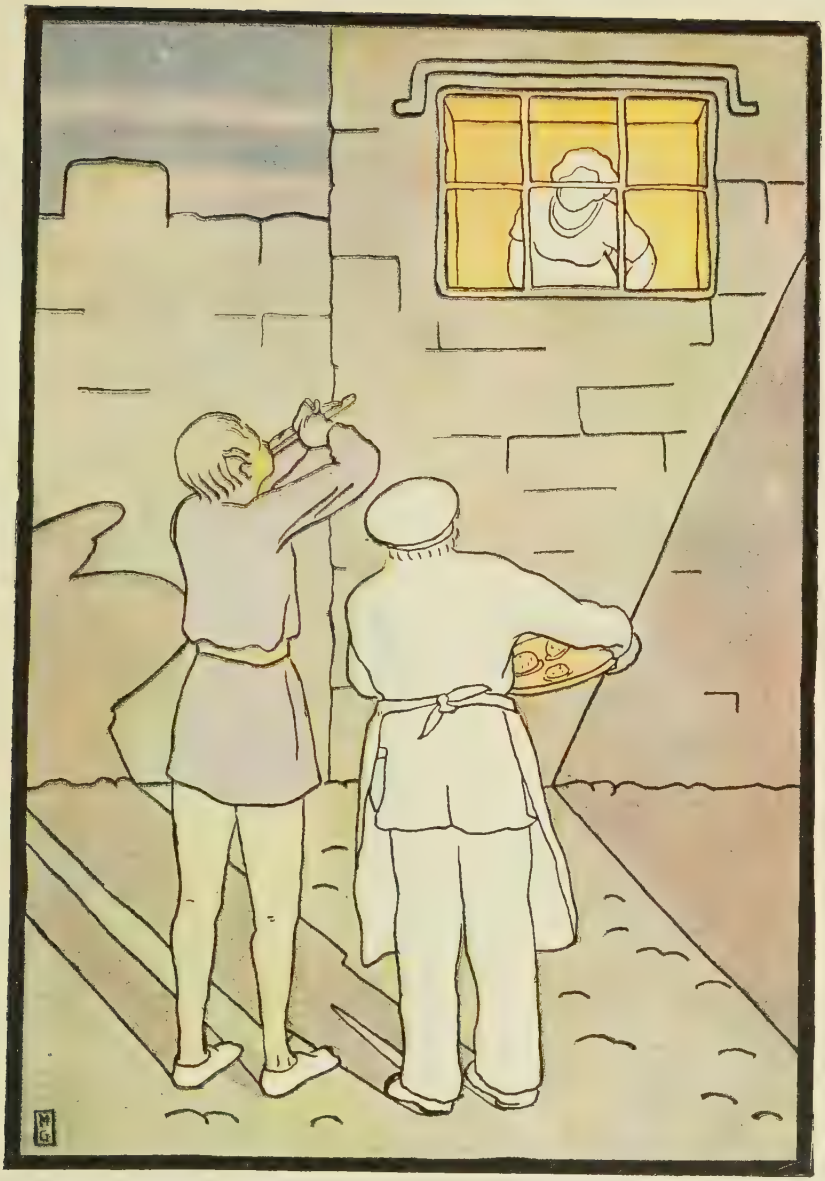
Witch. He will not. He never will stretch a hand to you again or look at you with love in his eyes.

Muireann. That is a lie! You cannot change him, you have no power over him! It is he will put you down and make an end of you when he will hear my story!

Witch. You will have no voice from this out to tell a story, or to give out any news good or bad.

Muireann. Oh! What is it— Let me go! Rury!

Witch. Did you think to make little of me that have worked spells from the early days of the world? (*She holds up a disguise with cat's head and paws.*)



"Rury! Rury! Where are you?"

Muireann. What are you doing?

Witch. I put that shape on you through the power of earth that holds and that nourishes all shapes of beasts and of men.

(*Witch is about to strike her with one of the three rods, but Muireann rushes away from her through the gateway. Witch follows her and a cry is heard outside. The men who took Rury away drag him back again, leaving him on the ground.*)

Rury (*starting up and throwing off cloak from his head*). Where is she? Where is my darling and my love?

Simon (*coming forward*). Where is she indeed?

Rury. Did she come out the door?

Simon. She did so.

Rury. Which side did she go? (*Muireann, disguised as a cat, creeps in at gate and goes to hide in shadow.*)

Simon. It's best for you go seek her outside the gate.

Rury. You are certain she has gone out?

Simon. She came down out of the house anyway. You can look around and see is she in this yard.

Rury. She might be hiding in the wood without.

Simon. Come on so. The supper is over, those giants will be scattering themselves in search of her. Come on.

Rury. I will find her if I have to go back to the Garden on the Edge of the World every step of the way. (*Goes towards gate.*)

Muireann (*rushing up to him*). Miau! Miau!

Rury (*shaking her off*). Hoosh! Hoosh! Get away out of that! I am in no humour for cats!

End of Scene IV., Act II.

Act III. Scene I.

The Garden. The tree is withered. Muireann and Gardener. She has taken off cat's head and paws and holds them in her hands.

Muireann. That is my story so far, and that is the cruelty was put upon me by the Witch.

Gardener. Death and defeat on her! But what way now does it chance you to speak natural?

Muireann. There comes around from heaven one day in the week, and one hour in that day, when there sounds through the air the Bell of the Saints out in Ireland, that has power to break for me the Witch's knot. And for that relief I give thanks to the King of Sunday.

Gardener. The Lord be praised for that much of reprieve.

Muireann. Listen and you will hear that sweet, holy sound.

(*A distant peal of bells heard.*)

Gardener (*taking off hat*). That it might go on for ever!

Muireann. But oh! What do you say hearing my case? Every time that hour comes around, the man that is my darling is not at hand!

Gardener. The grasshoppers are hundreds of years old and have heard a great deal of talk, and they never knew so great a pity!

Muireann. O Gardener! what shall I do at all, at all?

Gardener (*looking in the well*). Did you bring back the five little fishes itself safe and sound?

Muireann. My grief! When they saw me in the form of a cat they were in dread and affrighted. They went from me with a leap into a little freshwater stream. It is likely they are lost and swallowed up ere this by the beasts of the great ocean.

Gardener. The poor little silvery things.

Muireann. Going from me, they left me as lonesome as that you never saw the like.

Gardener. No wonder at all in that.

Muireann. It is my sorrow the Witch did not turn me to be a duck, the way I could sail along with them.

Gardener. If Rury the King's son would but come!

Muireann. Oh! You have knowledge! Cannot you so much as rub me with a magic stone, or boil down an herb to take the enchantment from me?

Gardener. So long as she owns those Three Rods of Mastery her power is stronger out and out than mine.

Muireann. Then I am lost and under disgrace for ever.

Gardener. Bad cess to her, and that she may have her face to the storm whatever wind will blow!

Muireann. O Gardener! I that never drank out of a

cup not having at the least a silver rim, look at me now the way I am!

Gardener. The King's son to come he will relieve you.

Muireann. It is certain at one time he loved me—Yet to know he was coming, I would go hide myself in the fold of a hill—or my heart would break in me like a nut. It is bad the way I am! It is best for me waste and wither away!

Gardener. He is the only one can save you.

Muireann. It would be better for me have gone to my death the time he gave me his love, than to be turned into a thing displeasing to him. Sorrow was never in it till now! I have a bad way in the day and in the night time. It is a bad case I to be that way. There is a road love leads to, and it is that brought me under disgrace. It was not right of the witch-woman! It would be better for me be under the sod than he to come meet me, and to see but the ugly grey face of a cat!

Gardener. He would recognize you in spite of all, and would know it to be but spells.

Muireann. O Gardener! It is what happened. When I came before him and strove to call to him, I could give but the cry of the beast I am under the shape of. He was angry, he hooshed me off. O Rury, it was not from you I deserved it! I left a drop of my heart's blood in that place!

(*Pampogue comes.*)

Pampogue. God save all here except the cat!

Gardener. It would be more fitting a young person to be kind.

Pampogue. The next time the King of Ireland's son will come, it is to myself he will give his love.

Muireann. It is not the time to show me unkindness when my heart is closed up with trouble.

Pampogue. They are saying the little fishes did not trust you.

Gardener. That is no way to be talking.

Muireann. It is not the King of Ireland's son will forgive you for that treatment.

Pampogue. What call have you to kings unless it might be the King Cat of the Western Island, that has you under his rule from this out.

Muireann. My thought is free to go where it likes, and to my own father that is a King.

Pampogue. What way could you sit and eat at his table? A four-footed thing! It is a red mouse with the fur on it would be your choice dish.

Gardener. That is beyond all measure!

Pampogue. You have your own business to attend to. Herself sent this out for you to put up on the tree.

(*Gives him board with writing.*)

Gardener (*putting it up*). What is it is written on it? The sight that is failing on me.

Pampogue (*running off*). It is but to scare blackbirds.

Muireann (*looking at it*). It is an offer of a fourpenny bit to any one that will kill a cat.

Gardener (*throwing it down and stamping on it*). That she may be seven hundred times worse this time next year! That she may never be cross until she meets with her death!

(*Simon comes in.*)

Muireann. Oh! Is your master here?

Simon. We are after climbing the wall.

Muireann. Where is he?

Simon. We travelled far. He is washing the sweat from his flesh, and the dust.

Muireann. Oh, if he could see me while I am this way he would not turn from me!

Gardener. Is it down at the stream to the west he is?

Simon. I couldn't be rightly sure. It's best go seek him there.

Gardener (*to Muireann*). Go search for him before the ringing of the bells will stop. (*She goes.*) That's right. It is Rury will take her case in hand.

Simon. It would be best for him leave meddling with any haunted people at all.

Gardener. A well-reared girl; a great beauty. It is well for him get her for a companion and a wife.

Simon. It might. I would sooner a woman you would trust to go to the dairy to bring you in a drop of cream.

Gardener. She that had a little blush on her cheek was redder than the royal rose! It would make you sorry the way she is now, fretting and bare alone.

Simon. It is the King's son I am in charge of.

Gardener. She is as nice as you'd ask. A very mannerly little girl. They match one another as well as two ears of wheat.

Simon. I never would like cats, if it was a whole fleet of them was in it.

Gardener. You are talking like an innocent or a fool. You know well until this spell was put upon her she was an honest, proper woman. I never saw one so nice, or with such a coaxing way.

Simon. I would sooner nearly to take the Witch's daughter that is natural, if she is cross itself. To go with a strange thing would put back your children.

Gardener. She will be the same as before, and the enchantment taken off of her.

Simon. I would not wish him to marry a cat-woman, and she having a pound for every day of the year, or a divide of the three divides of the world, the same as Marcus Crassus or Pompey of the Plain.

Gardener. He is in pieces about her. His soul is gone into her. You know that well.

Simon. He is ignorant of what she is presently.

Gardener. He is death down on her.

Simon. The sickness of love is all one with madness that is put on us by the moon. He would be cured with one scrape of her paw. Crooked hooks on her hands, and maybe a poison-claw at the tip of her tail. A very troublesome life.

Gardener. They are coming! She has found him!

Simon. What way did she do that I wonder, and I after sending her west?

Gardener. No, but it is Pampogue is with him.

(*Rury and Pampogue come in.*)

Rury (*to Pampogue*). Have you no news to give me?

Pampogue. I have not, unless you will give it to me yourself.

Rury. It dreams to me that I saw her in the trees beyond and then she was gone like a little breeze of wind.

Pampogue. She is gone out of this. You will not find her.

Rury. I will find her. I will ransack every corner of the earth. I will go following after her for ever.

Pampogue. Why would you not stop with myself? I will give you all my riches and my estate. You will never know trouble any more.

Rury. From the west of the world to the freshness of the world I will search for her in every place!

Pampogue. You will never find the woman will give you love the same as myself.

Rury. (*Calling out.*) Muireann! Muireann!

Pampogue. I gave up a great match for your sake. I took my seven oaths I would take no other man. (*Takes his hand.*)

Rury. Let go of me! I have it in my mind you did away with her yourself, or the Hag, your mother! I give you my word if you handle and hinder me I will strike off your head with my sword. (*She cries out and runs off.*)

(*To Gardener*). It is you gave me a bad advice bidding me leave her in this place. Tell me, where is she now?

Gardener (*tries to speak but cannot for a moment*). My tongue that is turned to stone when I strive to tell the secrets that are outside the world.

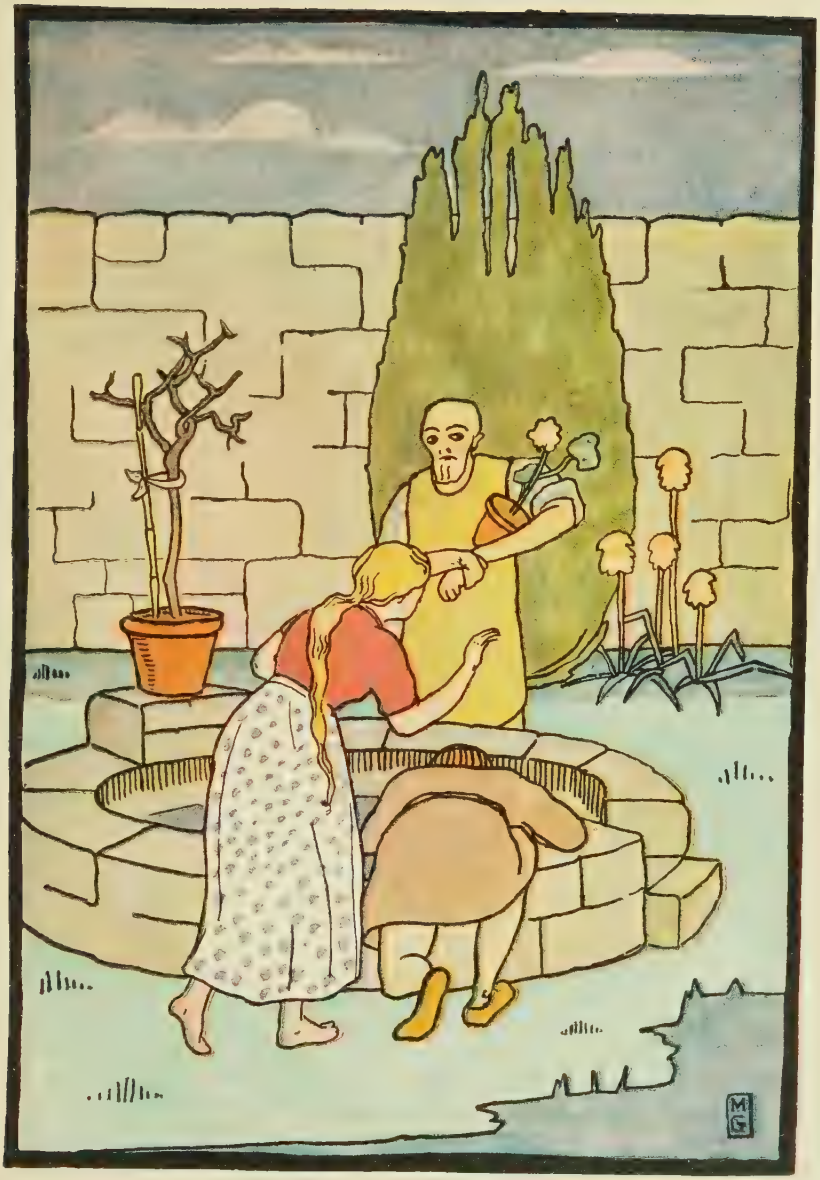
Rury (*to Simon*). Did you see no sign of her?

Simon. You will never come to her. You will never get her in hardness or in softness; without or within; on horseback or on foot. It is as good for you give up the search.

Rury. What was it happened when she came out the Giant's door? What did I bring her to, playing her little pipe? It is here beside the well I first saw her. The worst thing in the world to me now is to see my own shadow, and it alone!

Gardener. It is in the well you will maybe see her shadow again.

Rury (*kneeling by it*). Come back to me, and it will be a garden again, and not a place of nettles and elder and cornerakes. My grief that I left you for one moment only! It is long to me the night is and the day! (*Muireann comes behind him and bends over his shoulder.*) There is your very image down below—your shape and your features—there is a mist of water between us— And oh, I have a mind to throw myself in after you, and we will be a King and a Queen for ever in Land-Under-Wave, and I will forget father and country, and all that is before me and all that is behind! And if I would do that for the sake of your shadow, what would I do for yourself?



"Come back to me, and it will be a garden again, and not a place of nettles and elder and corncrakes."

Muireann (*in a whisper*). Rury! (*The bells stop of a sudden. Witch appears behind Muireann and drags her back behind trees, putting cat's head back on her.*)

Rury (*starting up*). Where are you? Muireann! (*A miau is heard.*) Where is she? I saw her in the well. I heard her voice. I am certain she was here. Where is she? (*Another miau from back.*) It was a vision. That cat broke it with her miauing. No, no, she was here—I will go search. (*Witch comes before him.*)

Witch. Have you lost from your mind the man that is watching for you out in Ireland?

Rury. I will go back to him after I will come up with her.

Witch. To-day that is Lady Day in Harvest, in the yellow moon of the badgers. What day was it you set out from Ireland?

Simon. This day year for the world!

Rury. That cannot be! We have not been travelling through the length of a year.

Witch. You did not feel the time passing when you went stumbling on from the Wood of Wonders, or when you were in an enchanted sleep.

Rury. I will go. I must go back to my father.

Simon. Where is the use going home to the very day, where you are without the apple for his cure?

Rury. I will go without it. I will confess my disgrace. I will not fail him where I gave my word. Let him put on me whatever punishment he will.

Simon. Sick or sound he will make you welcome. It is likely he will smother you with kisses unless he will drown you in tears. (*To Gardener.*) And he to have gone out itself and he lying in his lone at Corcomroe, it is my own master that will get the sway!

Rury (*to Gardener*). Give me some swift way to go home.

Simon. Let it be a safe way. I have no swim to cross the sea, unless I'd make a boat of my hat.

Gardener. Herself that could put a swan-gander between your legs, or shape a flying ship out of two cross sticks.

Witch (*to Gardener*). Pull up for them two stalks of the Bohilaun, the horses of the Sheogue. (*He brings two stalks of yellow rag-weed and gives one to Rury, one to Simon.*)

Simon. Is it a yellow horse will be under me, and it having four green legs?

Witch (*to Rury*). A golden saddle on his back and a silver bridle on his head, he will bring you coursing through the skies as swift as the sun and moon. (*Pushes them off.*)

Pampogue (*coming and looking round*). It is you sent him away!

Witch. If I did, it was to save you from refusal and from shame.

Pampogue. You got your own share of the joy of the world, and now you begrudge me my own! The seven deaths upon you!

Witch. Have a care! The senses are gone astray on you.

Pampogue. That I may never see you again! It is ugly you are to me whatever shape you may put on! I tell you I will have that young man, by paying or by prayers! Let you give me up your treasure to buy him; you have the world to ramble, begging from door to door!

Witch (*holding up rods*). If you let one more word out from your mouth I will strike you with these Rods!

Pampogue (*snatching them*). It is long enough you have been spreading terror with these Rods and bringing myself no profit with them! That your luck may go backward from this out! (*Flings them away.*)

(*Gardener comes swiftly and takes them. Witch stumbles and sits down, her head in hands.*)

End of Scene I., Act III.

Act III. Scene II.

The King's Court as before. The King is propped up in his bed, looking from window. Servants with him.

King (*to Servant*). Is there e'er a sign of him coming?

Servant. There is not.

King. The delay is very heavy on me. It is a year since he went out, and a day.

Servant. It is a long time we are without tale or tidings of him.

King. I am very sure he will come. If it were not for that I would die over.

Servant. It isn't easy bring yourself in the door to the very day of the month.

King. He will come if he is on the ridge of the world. He not to be here by the heel of evening I will know he has found his harbour in Oilean-na-Marav, that is the Island of the Dead.

Servant. There is not one but wishes him to be back. No life in the place and no courage. No drinking or feasting or giving out rewards.

King. What time is it now?

Servant (*looking out*). By the shadow under the yew tree it should be on the stroke of noon. (*Horn heard and bustle.*)

King. There he is come! I knew well he would not fail. That sort is not in his breed, and he of the root-stock of kings.

Servant. I am well pleased he to have brought the cure.

King. With or without the apple he will be welcome. Put now the chair here close beside me.

Doctor (*coming in*). I came in and the dust of the road upon me. I met with delays on my journey. I was in dread I might be late.

King. Did he come with you? Rury, my son?

Doctor. I came with myself only.

King. Did you pass him on the way?

Doctor. I did not. Is it that he did not come?

King. He not to be here, he is not living.

Doctor. I would sooner nearly that.

King. Is it that you wish his death?

Doctor. Not at all, not at all. But I would not give an inch of my toe for a son that would forget his father.

King. If he forgot me, my last end is come. It is likely death did not forget me.

Doctor. There is one did not forget you, and that man is myself. It is I will give you lengthening of life.

King. You will try no more of your cures on me where the apple of healing did not come.

Doctor. The apple is here. (*Holds it up.*) It is I myself have brought it for your cure.

King. The apple! Is that it in your hand?

Doctor. The Golden Apple from the Garden at the World's End.

King. Give it here to me.

Doctor. Have a care. Do not be in so great a hurry.

King (*taking a bite*). Why wouldn't I hurry and death being after my life like a hound after a hunted hare?

Doctor. It is to choke yourself you will.

King (*coughing*). Cut it in small pieces, so.

Doctor (*cutting and giving him bits*). Fair and easy goes far in a day.

King (*eating*). I would say it to be running through my veins— It is going to the cockles of my heart— (*Eats.*) I think I am out of the body and in the City of the Sun— There is light going through me, and heat!

Doctor. That is the sap beginning to work. It is full up of the virtue of the Tree.

King. Springtime is come— We are done with the nursing mother of the cold——

Doctor. Here is the heart of the apple, and the seeds——

King. I feel in me the rising of the waves of Power.

Doctor. It is going through you the same as a flame.

King (*sitting up. To Servant*). Go bid the cooks to put a tail end of beef to the fire, fat and tender. Let it be roasted rare.

"I would say it to be running through my veins—It is going to the cockles of my heart—I think I am out of the body and in the City of the Sun——"

Servant. It is long we did not hear an order the like of that. (*Goes.*)

King. Bring here the barber. Let him put a face on me. Is there e'er a crumb left of the apple—or a pip——

(*Barber comes with basin and soap, and begins to shave him.*)

Doctor. It is a world's wonder— He is gone backward in age— He looks elegant in the face— He shows out like a boy of fifteen years!

King (*being shaved*). What way did you come to the apple?

Doctor. The voyage was very costly on me—but no matter. I came through it all in the end.

King. No doubt but you saw great wonders.

Doctor. It is much that I escaped with my life——

King. What sort is the Wood of Wonders? Is it as terrible as what they say?

Doctor. It is, to be sure.

King. You should be a great warrior to get the better of the Hag of Slaughter— Is it on a big tree the apple was?

Doctor. About the height of the house.

King. What size was the Garden?

Doctor. Sizeable enough— Wait now and I'll tell you about the great fight I had with the great Giant, Fatach Mor.

King. Is it that you fought with a giant?

Doctor. Wait till you hear——

King. You had great courage.

Doctor. That was the fight! Blacker than a coal

quenched in water he was, and having in every rib of hair the strength of a hundred men. It took me to tackle him!

King. And did you put him down?

Doctor. He never was flogged before. He came at me as strong as the spring-tide! We made the hard soft and the soft into spring wells. The mountains that were far came and looked at us, and the mountains that were near moved away from us.

King. That was a great battle!

Doctor. "Come on now," says he, "till I will put you under my long cold teeth." "Come on yourself," says I, "till I will make snuff of your bones!"

King. Do you hear that! The bravery of him!

Doctor. We fought through three quarters of the day till I put him down in the stones. He called out then for mercy. "It is much," says I, "if I give you your choice of two sods of earth to die on——"

King. My grief I was not there to see the fight.

Doctor. With that I struck the head off him. It is much that I brought away my life, having laid the Giant dead!

King. That is a great story. It will be told after the whole of us have left the world. And where at all at that time was Rury, my son?

Doctor. You can ask some other person than myself. I never was one to be carrying stories.

King. I leave my orders on you to tell out all that you heard.

Doctor. Ah! He's young! He's young!

King. Mind yourself! I am getting back my strength! Speak out when I bid you.

Doctor. Oh, it's not much I heard. The people were saying he ran wild, rambling and courting— He's young!

King. Is it for rambling and courting he left me to go to my death?

Doctor. He maybe couldn't make his way home. They were saying he had all his money spent, and that Simon the steward was tricking and telling lies on the road, striving to gather in more.

King. He was maybe in need of it.

Doctor. So they were saying—wild living. Giving out, the steward was, the King's son of Ireland was dead in the middle of a bog. Begging gold and silver he was for to furnish out the wake.

King. Is it that he gave out I myself had no means to bury my son?

Doctor. It is but humbugging he was, to gain hand-money for himself and the young prince.

King. That is queer humbugging to give out to the countries of the world that charity was needed to put a boarded coffin on the King of Ireland's son.

Doctor. Ah! the young do be apt to run random and they out foreign.

King. I would sooner nearly he to be dead in earnest than to drag down my name the way he did! Let him keep out of this to his life's end!

(*A shout and music.*)

Servants (*rushing in*). Prince Rury is at the door.

King (*with a roar*). The young vagabond!

(*Rury and Simon come in.*)

Simon. Here we are now to the very year and a day!

Rury (*kneeling beside bed*). I ask your forgiveness, father.

King. That is what you will not get.

Rury. It has failed me to bring the apple.

King. So I see, and that you are come back empty.

Rury. My grief that it is so.

King. Leaving me stretched on the bed, and dragging down my name by your doings! To go begging on the road, having scattered my gold and banished it! It is much that your head is not on the block!

Rury (*getting up*). That is the best sound I heard yet. The strength that has come into your voice.

King. If I have strength, there is no debt on me to you. Ireland and the world waiting on you to bring me the cure, and you humbugging, and foxing death for your sport.

Rury. I never drew bridle or breath till I came back to you on this very day. I did all that a son can do.

King. Tell out so the story of your doings.

Rury. Let the poets tell out stories of me in the time to come. It is what I will never do myself, where you did not believe my first word.

Simon. If he will not tell out his doings it is I myself will tell them out! He got the victory and the sway over the big Giant, Fatach Mor!

King. You have that story robbed from the doctor.

Simon. The doctor! Is it that he is in this place?

King. Here he is beside me. It is through the courage and the kindness of that man I got the apple. He has put down the Giant and brought away the cure.

Simon. I partly guessed it, and now I know it. It is the doctor, and no other, that was the thief!

Doctor. Stop your fool talk!

Simon. Fool yourself! I am as good a story as you any day! To say he fought the Giant! A man that is no use at home or abroad—that is not worth an empty box of matches! Well, it is easier save yourself from a rogue than from a liary person. A man telling lies would disgust you!

Doctor. You are well able yourself to tell stories and lies.

Simon. You tearing away our characters!

Rury. Come away out of this, where is no welcome only for thieves.

King. Whoever will say that, the head will be whipped off him!

Rury. I will not come back again till this flame of anger is burned out!

King. You will not go out of this, so fiery and unruly as you are! It is in the prison you will be lodged and chained.

Simon. Let the doctor be lodged there with us, and I'm content. I'll knock satisfaction out of him!

King. The doctor! I would give him the kingdom as

his reward, but that no man following his trade ever wore the crown of Ireland.

Simon. And Rury to be thrown out and put back from what he has earned! I'm like the people that loses their mind and can't remember their memory.

Doctor. There is a plague of madness on him! Let him be tied by the five smalls!

King. Bring them away! (*To the Guards*). Lodge Prince Rury and his comrade in the jail!

(*Takes Doctor's arm and walks to door. Simon is dragged towards other door.*)

Simon. Oh! that doctor! Give me the trumpets of the guard till I'll draw down a curse and a poem of vengeance! A mist of misfortune on you! Breaking and bruising on you! The curse of the weak on you, and of the strong! All the fevers ever you meet with to be put running and racing through your blood! The curse of all you cured on you, and of all that you did not cure!

(*The cat* (*Muireann*), *which has come in, flies at Doctor and scratches him. Doctor calls out and rushes through door.*)

Rury. Any one would say that is the same cat was outside the Giant's castle the time I lost my secret love.

Simon. Cat, is it? It is no cat she is! I will tell it out now she befriended us. It is the daughter of a King under spells she is. What do you say now, hearing that?

(*Cat runs out.*)

Rury. A King's daughter—what is it? It could not be Muireann in that shape?

Simon. The Witch that put it on her the way she would lose your love.

Rury. Oh, my love and my darling!— Where is she— Where is she gone?

Simon. It is likely hiding from yourself she is. There is no woman would wish her bachelor to get a view of her, and she in a shape would not be pleasing to him.

Rury. My poor Muireann! My blossom of the branch!

Gardener (*rushing in*). Where is the young queen?

Rury. She is but gone this very minute. O Gardener! did you hear what happened her?

Gardener. I did, to be sure. It is that brought me here, to deliver her from the power of the Hag.

Rury. Can you do that?

Gardener. Look at what I have in my hand. Her Three Rods of Magic and Mastery. It is with them I can take off the spell.

Rury. You can do that! I will go then and strike off the Witch's head.

Gardener. She will be here within three minutes. It is easy to deal with her at this time. (*A miau heard outside door.*)

Rury. It is Muireann! (*Is going to door.*)

Gardener. Stop where you are. It is I myself will bring her back. (*Goes out.*)

Rury. That Hag to come here, I'll put her in a way that she will enchant no more King's daughters!

Simon. I'd ask no better than to be casting out to the wild dogs her three crooked bones. (*A low laugh heard.*)

Rury. That is my darling's little laugh!

Simon. So it had a sweet sound.

(*Muireann, led by Gardener, comes in wearing her fine clothes. She and Rury hold each other's hands.*)

Rury. Oh, Muireann! do I see you indeed? And what way did you come to me?

Muireann. The Giant that tied me in a bundle of green rushes and brought me here upon his shoulder. I was in dread I would scratch his face.

Rury. It was for my sake that trouble was put on you and that torment.

Muireann. And it was for your sake I parted with my little golden mitten!

Rury. Here I will put it on your hand.

(*Noise of people coming. Giant and wife enter leading Witch and Pampogue.*

Simon. The Giant! Is it pursuit of us he is?

Wife. Not at all. It is time for him be getting wittier.

Giant. It is a quiet Giant I am from this out.

Wife. Just a common peaceable man. He wouldn't harm a child in a thousand years.

Giant. To put myself under the King's protection I am, where the Grugach of the Humming is making threats, saying I have my contract with him broke.

Rury (*to Witch*). This day will be the end of your plots

and your enchantings by whatever way you will be put to death.

Simon. It would be right put her under the same shape she put on another.

Gardener. Let the daughter be turned to a rat for her to be skivering with her claws.

Witch. Do with me what you can do. But I ask mercy for the girl that is young.

Wife. Give her here to me. We will want some one in the latter end of our days to mind us and to bring in a gallon of water, or a thing of the kind. I'll learn her to be a good slave and a good washerwoman.

Gardener. She might get better senses yet. It is likely you will treat her better than the way she treated the young queen.

Witch. If she must work out her punishment let it be a natural one. But let no enchanter ever give her long life, as there is little profit in it.

Pampogue. You that are my mother, have been my enemy all through.

Witch. In that I am your nearest friend. I gave you what I could, and little good it was to you.

Rury. You are right asking no mercy for yourself.

Witch. There is coming some change in the world, and why would I go on battling? I am tired remembering the string of years behind me, where I made no great hand of my life. (*She suddenly snatches the three rods from the Gardener.*) I will leave my Three Rods of Mastery in no

other hand, or the joy of the seven spells! There— and there—and there— (*She breaks them, tottering back to door.*) I that have been on the flood tide, I will not wait for the ebb, or live a woman without courage for ever! (*Goes.*)

Gardener (*gathering up the pieces of rods and looking out after her*). With the breaking of the Rods her power is spent; all the years are come on her. There is nothing left of her on the flags but a little fistful of bones.

Simon. Her like to be banished out of the world, they will be no miss. In one way or another she had us all but done away with. (*Guards heard playing "O'Donnell Aboo" outside.*)

Giant. Is it that this is the King?

(*King, Doctor, and Guards come in.*)

King. Are you here yet, my thief of a son?

Rury. Your son is here. It is on the other side of you is the thief.

King. Have a care how you make little of the man that struck off Fatach Mor the Giant's head.

Giant (*coming forward*). What is it he is saying he did?

Doctor. The Giant! (*Runs behind King.*)

Giant. Come out of that! (*Drags him forwards.*) Is it my own head that you struck off?

Doctor. Leave me go! I never touched you, or harmed you at all.

Giant (*shaking him*). Coming to look at the red of my tongue and to count the ticking of my pulse— Telling me there was a worm within me, and it not being in it at all.

Doctor. Sure I had to tell you something.

Giant. Promising me the Golden Apple for my cure, robbing it from the young King. Away with you, after leaving me no better than I was.

King. Is it that you stole away the apple from my son?

Doctor. If I did, it was for your own healing.

King. I know you now to be a very roguish man.

Simon. Let him be put in the jail where we ourselves were to be lodged!

King. I wouldn't darken the jail with him! Bring him away till such time as my mind is made up will I send him attending lepers as a present to the King of the Bogs and Marshes, or will I hang him from a bridge in Dublin!

Rury (*putting hand on sword*). Who are these strangers coming in?

Gardener (*bringing in five young men*). With the breaking of the Witch's Rods the charm rose out of the fishes. Here they are now before you, the sons of the King of Spain.

Muireann. Oh! Is it that these are my dear brothers!

1st Brother. We are in our own shape at last.

Muireann. But— You were not so big— You were my little comrades and playfellows, and we rising— You are grown to be tall young men.

1st Brother. It is seven years since then.

Muireann. Oh, you can speak to me at last in your own voice!

Brother. The most thing we have to say to you is Goodbye.

Muireann. You must stop for my wedding feast. You will not refuse me that?

2d Brother. We will indeed. You are deserving of every good thing.

Muireann. You will be going home then to Spain, where our father is at the end of his days?

1st Brother. Not a fear of us! We have no mind for kings' courts. Aren't we after wearing out enough of our young life, closed up under water in a pond?

All the Brothers. There is another cause——

2d Brother. Whisper— There are too many fast days in it and Fridays. We are in dread we would be asked to eat fish.

1st Brother. We have the Witch's treasure to spend. It is to the Eastern world we will face, to go leaping on Arabian horses and fighting with the armies of the Greeks! (*They leap with joy.*)

King (*to Rury*). What way can I make up to you at all for giving in to the doctor's lies?

Rury. I will be well content to see you enjoying long life and good health.

King. It is likely indeed, if signs are signs, it is long till you will be handling Ireland. It is best for me give up the kingdom to you now, as it is well you earned it. You are sixteen times better than the lad that went out. Bog and meadow, fire and water, I will bestow it all upon you.

Rury. I will not take it, where I am well able to go out and win a country for myself.

Muireann. Why would you do that, and the whole kingdom of Spain being mine? (*He kisses her.*)

Giant (*to King*). To give me a gate-house or a thing of the sort, I could be of use lighting lamps in the streets or putting up scollops in the thatch. I am near tired telling lies.

Simon. I am done with going to a foreign country. It is too long I stood upon a sod of wandering. I don't know do they be talking Irish out in Spain?

Pampogue (*to Muireann*). Will you pardon and forgive me for all I did?

Simon (*to Pampogue*). They are taken up with themselves. Who knows but luck might turn to you? I might be looking for a companion for myself. It's a lonesome thing to be housekeeping alone!

End of Act III.

Curtain.

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